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WHITE SERPENT,

THE SHAWNEE SCOURGE.

OR,

INDIAN HEART, THE RENEGADE.

BY ANDREW DEARBORN,

NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

WHITE SEVENT

THE SEAWATE SCOURGE

OR

HOWAY HEAT, THE BENEFICENT

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BY ANDREW DEARBORN

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WHITE SERPENT, THE SHAWNEE SCOURGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAGEDY BY THE RIVER.

It was near the close of a day in February, 174—. A few miles above the junction of the Mohawk with the Hudson, a man and a boy were making their way northward. A good portion of the distance from Albany, they had journeyed on the ice, which still covered the river. But, indications of a break-up had obliged them to take to the forest. In doing so, the boy had accidentally stepped upon a thin section of ice near a jutting rock and gone under. As a result he lost his rifle, and only escaped drowning through the exertions of his companion. Once ashore, the latter divested himself of his outer garments, and the boy donned them—making as good a shift as circumstances would admit of, without waiting to build a fire.

"I reckon we k'n stan' it till we git to Thorpe's cabin ef 'taint any further'n ye say, Brom," said the man, as they resumed their journey.

"Yis, it ish very chlose away—not more ash two miles," answered the boy, with chattering teeth. "But de rifle-gun—oh, aw!"

"Sunthin' of a loss, lad, but the weepoon kin be replaced," returned the other. "It's jist the way, though. Instid of thankin' *Hix* fur puttin' me in the way of savin' y'ur life, y'ur jest next to grumblin' 'cos the rifle w'an't saved with it! It's gin'rally the case ef a man's saved from a gre't calamity he'll whine as soon's he's on his pins, 'cos he's got to put up with a leaster one. Now, liyar's a rifle lost, an'—"

"Tish not dat, Rhodan," interrupted the Dutch boy. "I very much t'anks Got an' you too; but de rifle-gun wash not mine!"

"All the same whether your'n or another's, lad; but it don't matter. Y'ur heart's right, ef y'ur onderstandin' ain't nice. Ye needn't worry 'bout the gun. Thorpe's got a second rifle, I'll warrant."

"He hash two—one his'n an' one Missus Thorpe's," replied the boy.

"An' she's one that would use it in an emargincy, I'll warrant," said the other. "Then y'ur sure they don't expect me?"

"They want to see you, bad's I did," answered the boy.

"Ho, ho," said Rhodan, with pardonable pride and gratification in his voice. "Bad's you did, eh?"

"Dat's what for I'sh been down to de Albany settlement two tre times on de ice," replied Brom. "I thought mebbe you come an' ask for Brom. Den I tole 'em whare you find me if you come."

"An' ye took to livin' with Thorpe 'cos ye l'arnt he was one o' my perticular friends did ye? An' fur thet, ye left y'ur Dutch friends. Hez Thorpe tole ye how I happined to sarve him an' *his*," added Rhodan in a strangely modulated voice.

"He tole me *some*," answered the boy, "an' I tole 'im all—how you brung me off from de Injuns, how dey kill all my peoples, an' how you'd been my fadder, an' got me place to live with friends."

"An' ye left 'em to live with Thorpe! All right, providin' both parties war agreed, as it seems they war. Rather strange—an' not so strange either. Wal—what did *she* say, Mistress Thorpe I mean, when ye tole 'em thet?"

"She look tender in master's eyes an' say, what noble man, how much owe us—no—how much we owe him. Oh, dey'll be much glad to see you, Rhodan."

"No doubt, lad, they will; an' I'll say I'm glad ye've gone to livin' with 'em seein' they've took themselves so fur outside the rig'lar settlement. But it's dangerous whar they be, sence the war is broke out ag'in. Yes, I did do 'em a good turn."

"You tells me, Rhodan—tell me all. Somehow, dey nefer did, *all*, I t'inks."

And the Dutch boy, exerting himself to keep up with the long strides of his companion, glanced curiously into his face.

"Why, it's a short story, lad—in fact, they told ye the gist of it, ef they told ye any. 'Twar this wise. Helen Thorpe—Helen Ward, rather, fur thet was her maiden name—had three lovers, an' *all* on 'em tried to win her hand. Of course, only one could do it, an' thet was Eli Thorpe. Of the two thet failed, one g'in 'er up like a man; but 'tother one, a des-p'rit, hardened chap, whom the gal would never incourage by a look, meant to hev 'er at all hazards. To cut it short, he laid in with some Injuns, an' they stole 'er from the Schenec-tada sittlemint. A raft o' men war raised, who s'arched fur the gal, an' had a tussle with a lot o' Injuns suspected o' hevin' took 'er away. But they didn't hev 'er—the tussle was fur nothin', except that two or three white men lost their lives, while about a dozen reds war killed. Bill Rojers hisselt was among the party, an' sunthin' in his conduct made me suspect that he was at the bottom o' the diviltry. I told Thorpe, an' we two watched 'im fur a week, till he started off toward an encampment of Mohawks, some twenty miles distant. Us two follered 'im thar alone, an' soon found thet Thorpe's betrothed was thar. 'Tain't nisissary to tell how we got 'er away, nor how, failin' to bring the culprit back, we left 'im fur dead in the woods, an' had all we could do to outwit them that pursued us. We did, though. Yis, yis, we did—brought Helen back safe an' sound. She's a sperited gal. None o' y'ur weak-hearted ones that'll faint at sight of an Injun. She helped us, fur she killed an Injun with her own hand!"

"An' how long ago wash dat, Rhodan?" inquired Brom.

"Little more'n a year, lad, as nigh as I kin tell ye. But we must hurry; it'll soon be dark."

In a few minutes the boy spoke again, interrupting an apparent reverie of the hunter's.

"Where ish der oder lover, Rhodan—what 'come of him?"

"The other, lad? Oh, wal—he, bein' an honest man, took to the ways of his gifts, which seemed to be more in the line o' fightin' Injuns an' killin' game, than in gainin' the love o' women. Thar's no more time to talk now, fur I'm thinkin' the quicker we git to the cabin, the better it'll be fur you an' y'ur shiverin'."

Any other than the simple-minded Dutch boy would have been struck with the peculiar modified tone of Rhodan, as he replied in the above words. The latter was a young man, not more than twenty-four years of age, with dark-blue eyes, tall and straight in his proportions, with a light, firm tread, probably acquired in forest life. His features were not handsome, but were of that cast which inspires confidence at a glance.

The two pursued their way about half a mile further in silence. The sun had set, and, though a gloom had begun to settle in the forest, they could still see their way clearly. The boy now took the lead, being better acquainted with the path. But Rhodan suddenly stopped him by a clasp on the shoulder.

"Stop, Brom," he said, in a whisper. "Hyar's tracks—who else but an Injun's? Though I ain't hearn of one in this section sence my arrival."

The tracks were seen at the edge of a small patch of snow. There were only two moccasin-prints, and not full at that; but Rhodan Bates' experienced eye not only told that they had been made by an Indian, but were recently made.

The minds of both were at once filled with the deepest anxiety. The tracks were in the direction of the cabin. Perhaps the dwelling of their friends was already compassed by the dreaded foe!

But no time was lost in these reflections. Hurriedly and in whispers, the frightened Dutch boy gave his friend a more particular description of the locality of the cabin, now less than a mile away. It stood within a few rods of the river-bank, and the edge of the clearing, south, was some two hundred yards away.

Between them and the clearing was an abrupt, hilly range, not more than a quarter of a mile in extent, and bordering so close to the river as to leave only a narrow footpath along the shore.

"Clearly the way for us to take, lad," said Rhodan. "'Tain't so nigh by your tell, an' it's one reason why the Injuns, few or many, won't take it. Come after me, an' fur y'ur life, tread light."

They could see the hill not far ahead and toward the right. Gliding forward, they soon struck the path, and pursued it till they found themselves at the further end of the little range.

They now halted and glanced around toward the left. After listening a few moments, Rhodan became convinced that a number of savages were gathered within a stone's throw of the edge of the clearing, now visible through the trees—awaiting the favorable moment, doubtless, when they could make quick work with the inmates of the cabin!

"One thing is sartin, lad: they don't suspect any lurkers 'eside theirselves, an' thet's favorable fur us. But the difficulty is yit our'n—to git past 'em 'ithout their knowin' it."

For several moments Rhodan remained in a silent study, the Dutch boy not presuming to utter a word. Sorely frightened, the lad depended entirely upon the resources of his friend. The latter saw but one alternative, and that was to try to creep past their foes. He communicated this to the boy.

"It'll be a slow work, Brom; but we'll have time, fur the red imps won't move to the attack till they b'lieve the cabin is asleep. Be car'ful how ye place a hand or knee; an' remember, the lives of our friends, as well as our own, depind on our secrecy."

The gloom around them was now more deep, and favored their movements. Slowly, and with extreme caution, foot by foot, they crept forward. Fifteen minutes thus passed, and Rhodan knew they were beyond the lurking savages. Forty rods further would bring them to the edge of the clearing.

As he realized this, he heard a commotion behind. Some of the Indians were moving toward them.

"Lie still, lad!" he whispered. "Keep close to the ground. If they come on, we must run fur it. But not afore I give the word!"

Both lay as motionless as the logs around them. In a few seconds the hunter became aware that but one of the Indians was moving toward him. This fellow stopped within ten feet of the whites. His object was apparent—to see if a light yet shone from the window of the cabin. This was the case, for Rhodan himself had noted it. He also noted another fact—that this spy was *not* an Indian, but a white like himself! His keen vision detected this, despite the gloom, which was lessened by his looking up at the other, and having the advantage of the straggling light that came from overhead.

The fellow stood a few moments and then turned back into the forest depths. The moment he turned, a sudden suspicion came into Rhodan's mind.

"Ef 'tain't Bill Rojers hisself, I'm blind," he soliloquized. "Ah's me! A plot, with love, jealousy, hatrid, an' revin, ahid it! An' here am I, in fur it a *second* time! Thar strange happinin's in this world, there is! Brom!" he added in a whisper, "crawl on ag'in."

The boy obeyed; but they had not moved a rod, when other footsteps were heard approaching, and again they hugged the ground. Two savages were advancing, and Rhodan quickly saw that these would come directly upon them.

"Ye *hear*, Brom!" he whispered. "The minnit my rifle speaks, do ye run fur life!"

While thus speaking he changed his position, so that he could use his rifle quickly. The maneuver was heard by the two savages, causing them to halt involuntarily less than a dozen feet away. The next moment a report rung out, and one of them fell, never to rise again. Ere the report ceased its echo, the other was laid prostrate by the sweep of Rhodan's rifle. And then he himself bounded away after the boy!

The sudden surprise and confusion of the Indians were most favorable for the fugitives. And yet they were no more than fairly within the clearing, when a savage horde, was upon their heels. The cabin was in plain view, though two hundred yards away. Rhodan calculated when his pursuers would emerge from the woods, for he knew a volley would be fired the moment they had himself and Brom in view. And their angry yells revealed it.

"Down with ye, lad, *flat*!" cried Rhodan, himself setting the example. They were barely down when a dozen bullets rained over them.

Up again and onward for dear life! And now something cheers them in their race. Two figures are outside the cabin, which they know are Thorpe and his wife. The savages are coming on, running as only Indians can, mad with rage at the way they have been duped, and fierce for blood. As soon as the horde are near enough, Thorpe and his brave wife fire, and two pursuers drop by the way. But the rest falter not, till, just as the fugitives reach the cabin, one of the Indians,

whose rifle has been held in reserve, fires, and Rhodan falls nearly across the threshold of the door!

"Quick, Brom! Helen! lay hold here!" shouted Thorpe.

Rhodan was dragged just clear of the door-sweep as the savages rushed up. A hatchet whizzed into the room, barely missing the head of Thorpe, who dropped his charge and jumped against the door.

"Now, for *life*!" he cried, as, assisted by his young wife and Brom, he exerted an almost superhuman strength in his efforts to close it. But, despite their endeavors, the door began to give back before the brawny arms and shoulders outside.

"A minnit longer!" said Rhodan, more by gesture than words, as, staggering to his feet, he hurried to the rude fireplace over which hung a kettle of boiling water.

Seizing this, he hurried back and dashed its contents through the opening, full upon the exposed arms and shoulders of the assailants. There followed howls of pain; the outside pressure was relaxed, and in an instant the stout door was closed and firmly barred!

"The winders—see to them, *quick*!" said Rhodan. "The cusses'll sca'ce make out much at the door."

"They're already secured—we saw to that the moment we heard your rifle out yonder, Rhodan. God bless you, old friend; you are hurt!"

And the man, Eli Thorpe, grasped one hand of the hunter, while his wife seized the other—both searching his face with tender, anxious looks.

"No, Eli—no, Helen—the bullet plowed rather deep across the top o' my head an' stunned me like fur a minnit; but ye see I'm nigh over the feelin' a'ready."

As he spoke, he returned their clasp; then, pulling off his fur cap, the blood dripped from his dark hair upon the floor.

"You *are* hurt, badly, Rhodan," said Helen. "Quick, Eli, some water; he is pale as death, and for *us* again."

The hunter did, indeed, stagger as he stepped toward a bench at one side of the room. Thorpe sprung for the water, while his wife sustained a hold upon Rhodan till he sunk down upon the rude seat.

"Of course fur *you*, Helen, an' fur him, too," he murmured; "ye'r right—fur *both* on ye."

"I understand, Rhodan—*brother* Rhodan!" she said, tenderly.

Her husband came with cold water. Rhodan drank some, and Helen gently bathed his head.

"Thet does it—I'm comin' out o' this weakness fast!" said Rhodan, suddenly standing up. "Let the rest go till we calculate on our chances fur meetin' the devilments o' them outside. I don't like their stillness, which is uncommon. Now, what's—"

He was interrupted by a shock against the door, making the cabin tremble.

"This way!" cried Thorpe. "Ha! Brom has reloaded the rifles!"

He sprung up a rude stairway into the loft, from which, a moment later, came the report of two rifles in quick succession. Each was followed by a death-shriek, and the space about the door was at once vacated.

"Ay, yell, ef thet'll ease y'ur venim," said Rhodan, as the savages withdrew. "Three rifles'll keep 'em from workin' ag'in the door—thet's sart'in, Eli. Whar's their other chances, pervidin' they hev any? I ain't l'arnt the lay o' y'ur cabin yit."

"They can't get in except through the door, Rhodan. The walls are solid-logged, and will defy bullets; but *fire*—suppose they try that?"

"We must meet 'em as best we kin, an' trust the inding to Proverdence," answered Rhodan. "One thing's, the logs are sunthin' wet, an' I hardly think the cusses'll try it."

"Then we need have no great fear. Old friend, this is providential. But for you, I think we should have been taken. I hadn't the least suspicion that any hostile demonstrations were making toward this section. For the sake of Helen I must return to Albany or Schenectada as soon as possible."

"Once rid o' this scrape, it's y'ur course, Eli. Guard the treasure Heaven's gi'n ye. But I needn't say it!"

The two clasped hands and remained silent for a moment. It was a strange spectacle. Eli understood the feelings of his more than friend. He knew that the hopeless love he had entertained for Helen would never go out toward another.

And he fully knew the noble nature that existed under a rough exterior. He knew it, and trusted it to the uttermost.

"Where have you been this long while, Rhodan?" he asked.

"Down Varginny way. I took a notion to stroll up hyar, abouts ag'in, an' met the Dutch boy, who told me of y'ur wharabouts. So I conquered my foolishness, an' come on--jest in time, it seems. Ain't they movin' toward the door ag'in?"

Both glanced through the slanting loops commanding the space about the door. No Indians were seen, and the slight noise ceased.

"Plannin' some way of attack, likely," said Rhodan. "We must watch, both with eyes an' ears."

"You go down, Rhodan. Helen will see to your wound better, and there are some spirits in the cupboard. I know you are weak, old friend. I will watch here alone for the present."

"I've one thing to tell ye fust, Eli. It may be well not to speak of it yit, afore Helen. *Bill Rojers, the rinegade, leads these Injuns!*"

"Bill Rojers!" echoed Thorpe, in a tone full of deep and painful anxiety. "Rhodan, are you sure of what you say?"

"I'd e'en'most stake my life on't, Eli," answered the other who thereupon briefly related how he had discovered the renegade.

"So ye see what 'tis," he resumed. "Injun hate an' white together. Ye know what the hellion's hyar for. He found out y'ur situation an's bound ter foller the bent of 'is hate."

"Yes, I know," said Thorpe, in a husky voice. "But go row, Rhodan, and send up Brom--ah, the boy's here already."

Thorpe was mistaken. Instead, the figure that now glided to his side was that of Helen, and she had heard the fearful words of Rhodan.

"It does not cower me, dear husband," she said. "It will increase the vigilance of us all. God reigns. I put my trust in Him, aided by husband and brother!"

"Amen!" said the young hunter, solemnly.

Then he followed her below. Brom came up, and shortly Thorpe also went down. The three consulted together,

arranging, so far as they could, for every possible emergency. The strictest vigilance was observed, and not a sound made. Outside, the stillness was only broken by the solemn roar from the river, as the loosened ice from far above began to come down, breaking huge masses before it.

It was a solemn night to the besieged. As the hours wore on, bringing no attack, they began to hope the Indians, with their renegade leader, had forsaken the spot. Midnight came, passed, and, with a thrill of joy, Thorpe, calling Brom to the loft, came down with the news that light was breaking in the east. He pressed Helen tenderly to his bosom.

"They have gone, I think, dear wife. What think you, Rhodan?"

"The freaks of an Injun ar' onsart'in, an' we kain't be perfect sure yit," answered the other. "Still—"

There was a fearful interruption. A report like a cannon echoed through the room, and the door fell in with a crash! Something struck Thorpe and he fell with a din in his ears of Indian yells mingled with a woman's shriek. And then all became a blank to him!

"Part of his skulp's gone, but he may live yit! Raise 'im a trifle, Chet, while I wipe the blood outen 'is eyes!"

The first words Thorpe heard as he began to regain consciousness. As recollection came, he started up wildly.

"Where is *she*, my wife—oh, God, where is Helen?" he cried.

Looking around as he spoke, he saw seven or eight rough frontiersmen, in the midst of whom stood the boy, Brom, pale and trembling. A little distance away sat his friend Rhodan, who, on the instant, rose and limped to his side.

"Rhodan, *tell me*, for the love of God, *quick!*—where is she?" Thorpe cried again.

"Eli," said Rhodan, with forced calmness, "try ter b'ar what must be told. 'Tain't the *wust* thet has happined, fur *he* hain't got 'er. The surgin' waters was more marcifful than the rinegade!"

Thorpe gave a quick glance at the river, saw the surging

water full of floating ice, some of which was piled up, obstructing a view of the further shore. Then to his friend:

"So she is dead, Rhodan—drowned! Oh, my Helen, and my *unborn child*! God be merciful! How was it? I must hear, and I must *bear*!"

"Take one swaller of this licker fust, an' not try ter raise yer head much yit," said one who was helping to support Thorpe. "An' you, tew, stranger," he added, addressing Rhodan. "Hurry up with the bandages, boys, fur they're needed."

"Now tell me—tell me all," said Thorpe, a moment later.

"The door was bu'st to pieces with powder," began the man who supported him. "At least, so much so, that one blow with the log yonder in the hands of half a dozen Injuns shivered it complete. We chaps camped late last night 'ithin half a mile o' this spot, not knowin' a settler was hyar, much less that a passel o' red skunks war a-tryin' to sarcumvent an' murder 'im. We roused 'arly an' happined ter strike the clearin' jest as the blow-up took place. The imps war unusual detarmined, fur it must have took all their powder, an' that's why they run the minnit we come nigh enuff ter pour a volley into 'em. We couldn't save *her*," added the speaker, sorrowfully. "Afore we got ter close quarters, the reds took ter the ice, which parted nigh the shore afore we could foller 'em. Yer friend—Rhodan, as ye call 'im—fou't in a way that was never beat by mortil man, judgin' by what we could see as we fust come in upon 'em. He fell jest afore we fired and made the rush; an' it's what saved 'im, fur the Injun demons didn't wait then ter do any more'n make sure o' the—the woman."

"And she—" asked Thorpe, huskily, as the other paused and looked up at his comrades.

"'Twas a hard sight; but, mister, as yer friend says, 'twas much better fur her ter find an honorable grave in the water, than ter live in the power o' that hellion, Bill Rojers!"

Thorpe uttered a deep groan and then sunk back, closing his eyes. The bandages were soon ready and applied with rough skill to the wounds of both men. Before night they were conveyed to Schenectada. Rhodan soon became able to resume his usual routine of life, and with his protégé,

Brom, left Thorpe, who recovered more slowly. The latter, despite the efforts of friends, remained moody and silent, hardly ever speaking of either misfortunes or hopes. And when Rhodan came back to see him after a month's absence, Thorpe had secretly and mysteriously departed—no one knew whither, leaving no word for his friend, Rhodan. It was surmised that he had become partially insane. Rhodan endeavored to find him, but in vain. None could give the least clue to his movements or whereabouts. It was at length believed that he had perished alone in the woods.

Years passed. The cabin on the river-bank became a ruin, and the once pleasant clearing was overgrown with young trees. The memory of Eli Thorpe seemed to have passed entirely from the minds of those who had known him.

CHAPTER II.

WHITE SERPENT.

It was in the beginning of July, 1763. In the north-western part of Pennsylvania, near a small stream, quite a body of Indians were encamped. Several fires were burning in their midst, and all, or nearly all, were engaged in broiling pieces of venison. None of them seemed to be particularly on the watch, and evidently had not the least suspicion that lurkers were near. Not far away, however, three white men were watching them closely, from behind a low, slaty ridge. Two of these were young men, while the third was fifty years of age. The garb and equipments of each bespoke their vocation—scouts and Indian-fighters.

"What do you say to this, Clute?" whispered one of the young men to the elder.

"No need o' askin', Ed," replied the other. "Yeou know, an' so duz Dick hyar, that them Shawnees mean mischief. Whether tow the settlement, the scatterin' families hyereabouts,

Brom, left Thorpe, who recovered more slowly. The latter, despite the efforts of friends, remained moody and silent, hardly ever speaking of either misfortunes or hopes. And when Rhodan came back to see him after a month's absence, Thorpe had secretly and mysteriously departed—no one knew whither, leaving no word for his friend, Rhodan. It was surmised that he had become partially insane. Rhodan endeavored to find him, but in vain. None could give the least clue to his movements or whereabouts. It was at length believed that he had perished alone in the woods.

Years passed. The cabin on the river-bank became a ruin, and the once pleasant clearing was overgrown with young trees. The memory of Eli Thorpe seemed to have passed entirely from the minds of those who had known him.

CHAPTER II.

WHITE SERPENT.

It was in the beginning of July, 1763. In the north-western part of Pennsylvania, near a small stream, quite a body of Indians were encamped. Several fires were burning in their midst, and all, or nearly all, were engaged in broiling pieces of venison. None of them seemed to be particularly on the watch, and evidently had not the least suspicion that lurkers were near. Not far away, however, three white men were watching them closely, from behind a low, slaty ridge. Two of these were young men, while the third was fifty years of age. The garb and equipments of each bespoke their vocation—scouts and Indian-fighters.

"What do you say to this, Clute?" whispered one of the young men to the elder.

"No need o' askin', Ed," replied the other. "Yeou know, an' so duz Dick hyar, that them Shawnees mean mischief. Whether tow the settlement, the scatterin' families hyereabouts,

or the forts, fust, ain't so plain. But I consate it's tew the forts."

"Well, we have been to two of the forts in this vicinity and given them warning of these movements."

"An' hed our *thanks* for't, tew, ain't we?" said the one called Clute, in a sneering tone. "They don't even seem ter snuff danger. Thar's peace, they say, an' the Injun skunks won't dast ter break it. Thet's the way they talk. Mebbe they'll find out their mistake, mebbe they will. They think we chapin ain't read Injun."

"We've done *our* duty, at any rate," replied Ed Chapin, "and if the fort garrisons won't be warned, the consequences will fall, not only upon their own heads, but upon many a struggling settlement and lone cabin. I hate to think of that."

"That's the wust part on't," said Ed Chapin's younger companion, Dick Welch. "But I'm thinkin' we'd better git out o' this, an' make for the settlement. 'Tain't so fur away but that these skunks may take a notion to attack it. Forewarned, fore—"

"Hush!" interrupted Clute. "Thar's some one enterin' the camp!"

Instantly the three were all eyes and ears. They saw a tall, lithe form emerge from the bushes and step firmly and gracefully in among the Indians. These instantly rose and greeted the new-comer. Hardly was his figure fully revealed, when Ed Chapin, stepping a little back, grasped the arms of his companions tightly.

"Do you see, Clute; an' *you*, Dick!" he whispered, excitedly. "It's that confounded Will Dureau, that's been hanging around the settlement for the past three weeks!"

"Be *keerful*, Ed; don't whisper so loud," cautioned Clute. "Yis, it's him an' thet's sartin. Less try ter hear what's sed."

This, however, was impossible. All three of the men knew a little of the Indian, and also of the French tongue—the latter being much used along the border. But, they were not near enough to distinguish the words of the Indians nor of the Frenchman.

"*Now* they'll believe what I told 'em about this chap—that he's a low, sneaking, intriguing whelp, like the majority of his countrymen," resumed Ed Chapin, angrily. "You know how

'twas, Clute—them at the settlement thought 'twas because I was jealous. But, it wasn't that. I knew Eunice Wilde didn't care a cent for the fellow, except that she used 'im well. That was all right, of course."

"I didn't see much of 'im, you know," said the elder man. "He had some sort of a story, 'bout being drove from Canada, didn't he?"

"Yes. I didn't believe it from the first, an' the rest didn't seem to care. I made 'im very uneasy with my questions. Looks likely he was tired of his countrymen—tired of every thing *French*, an' meant to live in the English settlements. 'Cos his mother was an Englishwoman, he said! The frozen snake has thawed out! He's even now hatchin' some plot ag'in' the settlement, an'—ah, see there!"

It had not yet been three minutes since the Frenchman entered the camp. The cause of Ed Chapin's sudden exclamation was a tall, rawboned Indian who now advanced from the further side of the camp, where, partially concealed, he had doubtless watched the new-comer. He, too, produced a visible impression on the three lurking whites; for, as he stalked forward they saw at once that he was a white man, though his bronzed skin and style of dress was much like that of the Indians. Ed Chapin and his two companions instinctively stooped lower behind the screen of bushes and glanced into each other's faces.

"Injun Heart!" said Dick.

"The renegade!" echoed Chapin.

"What d'ye say, boys?" muttered Clute, his breath coming short, and his eyes literally blazing. "Ar' ye willin' ter resk y'ur lives fur the sake of my puttin' thet bloody hellion out of existence? Remember, he led them thet murdered my wife, thet slew my tew innercent boys, an' thet so fur he hez escape'd the indivors of many a man thet's tried ter rid the settlemin's of a scourge an' the a'rth of a livin' Satan! I kin dew it—ef y'ur willin' as I be ter run the resk—an' then—"

"One moment, Clute—don't be rash. Ah, he sees us, I think!"

Ed Chapin was suddenly interrupted by the ringing report of Clute's rifle. The old scout's feelings at sight of the wretch whom he hated with a kind of crazy hate, had been too much

for his ordinary prudence. Wild, fierce yells arose from the camp, and a score of warriors, grasping their weapons, sprung toward the ledge. The three scouts darted away without learning the result of the shot. In the dense forests around them they hoped to escape. They were all good runners, but on their direct track came those who were equally good.

For a minute or more the ledge screened them from the pursuers; but as soon as the Indians had them in view they sent shot after shot toward the running whites. The latter dodged as much as possible, taking every advantage of ground and trees, to evade the storm of bullets. Suddenly Clute gave a hoarse cry and fell forward on his face.

"It's my death, boys," he cried. "Go on—save y'urselves if ye can!"

Notwithstanding the danger, both of the young men had halted, but, seeing that their friend was indeed mortally wounded and past help, they sped away again like the wind.

Circumstances were fearfully against them. They were fleeing in a direction opposite that of the settlement, and therefore likely to fall in with some other band of Indians, even should they have the good luck to escape immediate capture by these. Meantime the forest echoed to yells of the fiercest description. Indians directly behind, Indians on either flank.

"It's no use!" cried Dick Welch, hoarsely. "We might's well—turn—Ed—an' die fightin'!"

"No! run *on*!" said the other. "There's a pile of rocks yonder. We'll try to git behind *them* first."

Ed Chapin had no plan of escape other than by flight, and he knew this chance was very slight. The rocks would shield them only for a few moments at best. But, those few moments might enable them to steal off on one flank, before the pursuers on that side should come up.

In a short time they reached the pile of rocks; but before gaining the opposite side, young Chapin was struck by a bullet and fell. Up he quickly sprung again and by great exertions reached the opposite side of the pile. He could run no further.

"Go *on*, Dick!" he said, feebly. "Don't hesitate—there's the swamp we passed through an hour ago—you know the *hard* path—git to the settlement an' remember the Frenchman."

A moment later his friend disappeared through the dense bushes that skirted the swamp. In his previous excitement young Chapin had not remembered the location of the swamp, which covered several acres and was at many points inaccessible. But it was of no use to him now.

Growing weaker every moment, he dragged himself into a slight recess afforded by the rocks, cocked his rifle, and waited for his foes.

He had hardly made this last preparation, when the Indian sprang over and around the pile. Three or four of them went directly past, within six feet of where he sat, without discovering him. The reason was soon obvious. They saw the swamp, and instantly conjectured that the whites had retreated into its depths.

In three minutes young Chapin found himself alone. He could scarcely credit his senses. But, aside from his fearful wound and consequent weakness, he was far from being safe. Some of the savages had found where Dick Welch entered the morass, and started instantly on his track. Others, parting to the right and left, sprang away to make the circuit of the retreat, and intercept their enemy. With a silent heart-prayer that his friend might elude them, Ed Chapin nestled as far back as possible, and soon succeeded in drawing a few branches over his body. Even then he was but partially screened. Should any of the Shawnees search about the rocks, his discovery would be certain. Some of them were a little distance away, watching the curves of the swamp, doubtless in some hopes that the supposed fugitives would attempt to steal forth.

Half an hour thus passed, when, suddenly, angry shouts were heard far away on the opposite side of the morass. In his weak and bewildered state, young Chapin hardly knew how to interpret these. The savages that remained in view at once hurried away. The moment they were out of sight, Ed Chapin tried to crawl to a better place of security. But to do so seemed impossible. His wound was most painful, the bullet having entered his thigh. He might not be able to get to a safer place before some of the Shawnees would return. Stanching the blood from his wound as best he could, he resolved to further await the issue of events.

For three hours he remained, suffering great pain and fearful suspense. He could not help thinking of the fate of poor Clute. And he wondered whether the bullet of the old borderer had done its work. If so, the infamous "Indian Heart," as his savage allies called him, would commit no more atrocities. And the Frenchman, Will Dureau—where was he, and what particular object had he in remaining so long at the settlement? What other object than to gain the hand of Eurice Wilde! Perhaps Chapin himself would never again see the face of the noble, true girl he loved so well. But he felt that she would cherish his memory, would weep at his sad fate.

The young man's senses began to grow weak as well as his body. A burning thirst aggravated his pain and weakness. His principal desire, *now*, was to crawl to some spring or brook, and appease his thirst before he should die.

He raised his head at last, and saw that it was nearly night. Already were the forest shades deepening. A sound struck his ear—the noise of tramping feet. They passed him on either side in sullen silence, and he knew that his friend, Dick Welch, had escaped.

He waited till the savages were well past, and then, with intense pain, crawled forth. Supporting himself with his rifle, he staggered away toward the left. After thus proceeding a few rods, he sunk down, groaning aloud. Taking off his light hunting-shirt, he girded it about his hips and again moved on, staggering like a drunken man. Soon a welcome sound struck his ear—that of a murmuring stream. It seemed already to give him renewed strength. At length he reached its side, and, dropping to his full length, drank long and eagerly. When, with considerable exertion, he rose again to his feet, two Indians were standing nearly beside him. Knowing that he was completely at their mercy, the young man did not attempt to stir, but gazed at his enemies defiantly, waiting for them to act or speak.

"Wagh!" ejaculated one of them, a medium-sized, thick-set fellow, with a brutal leer. "How white brudder do, eh? Try for kul Injun Heart. Didn't, though. Make fat fire, now. Good."

As he thus spoke, he suddenly snatched away Chapin's rifle, and the latter sunk to the ground.

The Indian then conversed rapidly with his companion, who was a much larger and nobler-looking savage, with an eye that seemed to pierce the prisoner through. He made some proposition to the first, and waited for him to reply.

Whatever was the nature of this proposition, the other seemed to object to it.

They argued earnestly for a few moments in their own language. The young man could understand but little of this. He saw, however, that the first savage was surprised at the proposition of his comrade.

But the latter's project prevailed. Seizing the young man, they carried him further and further into the forest depths. What horrible designs did they contemplate? Once Ed Chapin thought he detected a figure gliding after them. What could this mean?

At last his captors halted at the foot of a large, rocky knoll. It was in a secluded, desolate-looking spot, hemmed in by the dense forest. The taller savage gave directions to his brother, who manifested much surprise as he parted the bushes before a seemingly impervious face of the rocks and moved aside a stone, disclosing the outlines of a dark, forbidding cavity beyond. And more was he surprised when he found, by the other's direction, a quantity of fat-pine torches lying near the spot. One of these he soon lighted, and then passed into a spacious cave, followed by his companion and the prisoner.

Ed Chapin was brave; but the deliberate action of his captors, so secret and unusual, filled him with dread forebodings. He would, even now, have struggled desperately to anticipate the fate in store for him; but it was impossible. Not only was he without any weapon, but also so weak that he could not stand alone. As soon as his captors had entered, they suffered him to drop upon the rough bottom of the cave.

Ed Chapin glanced up into the faces of his captors. The blazing torch, stuck in a crevice of the rock, revealed them plainly. The smaller of the savages was the first to speak, and he used the Shawnee tongue.

"We will talk in our white brother's language, Big Bow," replied the other, pointing, as he spoke, toward the prisoner. "You want me tell you why I bring prisoner here. You

have shown your trust in me, and now I will keep my promise and tell. Is Big Bow ready to hear?"

"Ready," answered the other. "Red Snake big warrior—wise head, be chief soon. Next to Indian Heart. Big Bow proud 'cos his brother. Good."

"Him not White Serpent," said the other, pointing again to the prisoner. "Wish he was. Me find him some time! Would Big Bow like to see him?"

"Ugh!" exclaimed the latter, with a slight shudder. "Do not Red Serpent know it? Is not he himself a more wise serpent that shall conquer our white foe of same name? He that has been the scourge of our race? The Red Serpent shall overcome the White. Big Bow hopes to see it. But what do now with prisoner?"

"Me show you, Big Bow; but first, see what I do!"

As Red Serpent spoke, he quickly and adroitly unloosened his outer garments, and they dropped to his feet. Underneath appeared a fine-tanned buckskin hunting-frock upon the breast of which the figure of a *white snake* was plainly revealed!

The eyes of Big Bow dilated, his limbs trembled, and his gaze seemed riveted upon the other without the power of removing it. A demoniac light, deadly and yet fascinating, shone from the eyes of him who had so suddenly changed his appearance.

"Ay, look! *Shawnee dog!*" he hissed, his voice and expression as suddenly changing. "You wished to see the White Serpent, and *he is here!* I have before revealed myself to a number of your accursed tribe, and they—ha! ha!—*they* never betrayed my secret! Can you guess *why*, Big Bow?"

The other did not reply. Terror paralyzed his tongue. The terrible glance of White Serpent, bent upon him, seemed to chain him in his tracks. He made, indeed, an attempt to grasp the tomahawk at his girdle, but the attempt was as futile as the struggles of a victim before the fiery gaze of a cobra. His arm fell helplessly at his side, and he was as incapable of voluntary action as though in a trance!

CHAPTER III.

THE DOUBLE AVENGERS.

ED CHAPIN gazed upon the two in breathless astonishment. He forgot his own helplessness, his pain and his danger in the spectacle before him.

White Serpent, without taking his eyes off his victim, stepped deliberately to his side, and relieved him of his weapons. This done, he moved back a pace.

"Big Bow does not answer," he said. "Then I will tell him. Because not *one* of his tribe ever lived long after knowing me! The White Serpent is death to a Shawnee—to all the accursed race," he added, in a tone so deep and full of hate that it made the blood of Chapin thrill.

"Is this strange to you, dog?" resumed White Serpent. "Would you know why it is so? Listen. For years I have been a terror to your tribe. Your best and most cunning warriors have tried in vain to seek me out and destroy me. I have sat with them in council, and planned with them how best to take *myself*. Ha! ha! do you begin to see why their plans have always failed? Do you now understand how so many of your warriors have mysteriously disappeared? 'Twas *my* hand that sent them to death! In the midnight hour, in the village and camp, wherever and whenever chance has offered, I have dealt *death*, swift, sure and secret! When your warriors have lain secreted, waiting to attack an exposed settlement, what—ha! ha!—*what* has been the part of White Serpent? To reconnoiter with trusty braves, to watch till the time came to strike. How did he employ the time? This way: First, he would lead his comrades near the settlement, then, before they could have a suspicion of his intent, he would slay them. Two, ay, *three*, has the White Serpent thus slain at a time, *alone*. Then what would he do? Hurry to the settlement, betray the intent and position of the Shawnees. What would follow? They themselves would be surprised; **many of their braves would fall, and the survivors flee before**

their white foes. White Serpent would flee with them—his tongue was cunning, and he could *blind* them. They never knew the double part he acted; they never will. They think Red Snake a trusty brave; they have seen him fight the Iroquois; they have followed his directions and been able to take scalps. What cared Red Snake? Shawnees, Iroquois—one race, he loves to see *both* fall. Indian Heart's time will come soon. White Serpent has looked for him for many years; but he was far away beyond the big river with a portion of your tribe. Within a week I have seen him, and *he* will soon know the White Serpent, but the knowledge will be followed by death—such a death as the despoiler of virtue, of homes, and of hopes merits! I told you all this that my eyes might gloat over your surprise, your terror. And now, wretch, dog, *your* time has come. You will never again tread the forest. To-morrow White Serpent will mingle again with your people, tell a cunning story of your death, and your tribe of fools will believe him. Ha! ha! they little suspect that Red Snake and White Serpent are one!”

At this moment a low, sepulchral cry came from the entrance of the cave. White Serpent uttered a single low note in reply. Immediately after an Indian entered the cave and stood before him. The new-comer was small in stature, but his aspect was ferocious. Big Bow's gaze was allowed to rest upon his face.

“Mark it well, dog,” said White Serpent. “And now see how the *dumb* can speak as well as the *deaf* hear. Silent Tongue, is the passage secured?”

“It is,” answered the other. “No sounds can go out from this place. A hundred Shawnee curs might camp before it and be none the wiser. But no lurkers are near. Is this game *mine*, White Serpent?”

“Yes; I will look on; but waste no time. You are sure it's the right one?”

“I know him well,” said the other. “His hand slew my old mother and tore the gray locks from her head. His hand mutilated the person of my wife, who died peaceably and was awaiting burial when the midnight attack came. Now—”

“No more talk, Silent Tongue. Go on, or I shall rob you

of your vengeance!" thundered White Serpent. "Your case is like mine, and this is *your* revenge. What will you do?"

Hardly were the words uttered when Silent Tongue dealt his victim a blow which laid him prostrate on the rough bottom of the cave, then he sprung over him; but the blow had broken the spell hitherto upon Big Bow, and he began a desperate struggle, doubtless hoping to receive his death at once. But in this he was disappointed. His enemy suffered him to rise partly, and then dealt swift, heavy blows with his hatchet upon the other's arms, legs and hips, uttering, at the same time, fierce maledictions, and adroitly frustrating Big Bow's endeavors to grasp him, or even to rise more than half-upright. White Serpent watched the evolutions of the foiled wretch, and listened to his desperate yells, with a grim, demoniac smile.

But the struggle was necessarily brief. Big Bow lay prostrate, ghastly wounds and numerous upon his shoulders, thighs and legs, without the power to make further struggles, except those of intense pain, and yet without being touched in a vital part!

Silent Tongue stood over his victim for a moment, and while gloating over his agony, reminded him of his own atrocious deeds. Then, dropping heavily astride Big Bow's breast, he placed his left hand firmly upon the poor wretch's brow, and with his right drew a keen blade from his girdle.

"Ha, dog!" he hissed savagely; "I care not to strip your head; but your eyes must come *out*!"

The point of the knife was brought in contact with Big Bow's eyes. The wretch closed both tightly; he tried to turn his head, tried to struggle, and a groan was forced from him that sounded unearthly as it echoed through the cave. The scene and characters might have nearly represented one of Dante's descriptions of the infernal regions.

But the hand of the avenger was suddenly stayed. A figure staggered up, and a weak, husky voice spoke:

"Hold, for God's sake! I am surely not deceived—you are a white man! As such, remember your race! You have suffered terrible wrongs and terribly have you avenged them. Further torture will disgrace—"

"Silence, fool!" thundered Silent Tongue. "Don't talk to me such stuff when this Satan's imp is before me, or—"

"It is enough," broke in the deep voice of White Serpent. "Finish your work, Silent Tongue."

The latter turned, meeting the terrible but calm gaze of his master. Then, quick as lightning, he raised the knife and plunged it in the heart of Big Bow! Edwin Chapin, unable longer to endure the shock of horror which he experienced fell back fainting and unconscious!

When he came to his senses, he uttered a sharp cry of pain. The torch-light revealed the presence of him called Silent Tongue, who was kneeling beside him.

"The bullet's out, friend," he said, his voice less savage than formerly. "It's an ugly wound, an' 'll keep ye shut up for a while. But 'twon't be long, for you'll have decent care, an' I know how to do for such wounds."

"Give me some water if you can. My head is racking."

"I s'pose so. Here is some. Oh, ye needn't try to set up. You can't do it very well, an' I ain't got the bandages fixed yit. I'll fix ye."

So saying, he raised young Chapin's head, and having collected a quantity of the skin-robes forming his couch under it, held a gourd of water to his lips. The other drank eagerly, and then settled back. His glance quickly went from his strange attendant and searched the cave. It extended some distance toward his left—*how* far he could not determine, as a projecting angle kept back the light from the torch. He heard the trickling of water as it came through some crevice above; saw two or three rifles leaning against the wall; but the White Serpent and the Shawnee victim were not to be seen!

"Who are you?" queried young Chapin.

"Ye've heard my name. I'm called Silent Tongue," answered his companion, who was busy attending to his wound.

"But I have penetrated your disguise. You're a white man."

"Mebbe ye'd rather die than be helped by such as me? I shall 'tend to ye for all that. Yes, I'm a white as well as you. I'm both deaf an' dumb when I'm amongst the cussed Shawnees. *That's* my strategy. I couldn't catch their lingo, so White Serpent brought me among 'em six months ago as an

Iroquois dummy. He fixed things; no matter how, but he *did* it. Ye've had a chance to know what I live among 'em *for*! I an' White Serpent hold the same hate. Must be ye've heard of *him*?"

"Yes, as a strange Indian—an enigma to the whites, a terror to his race—one whom no one could find out. But I now know that he also is a white man. Where is he now, and what has become of Big Bow?"

"White Serpent has took the carkiss out. He'll take proper care of it. He never misses his calculations. He'll place the body where the warriors will find it with the token of their secret enemy upon it. But they'll never mistrust *him*, ha! ha! They won't dream their trusty *Red Snake* is a White Serpent as well."

"Where were you this afternoon? Did you witness the pursuit?"

"*I*ined in it," said the man. "What else? Ye escaped 'em by a miracle. Even *we* didn't suspect but that ye'd got clear, or had hid in the swamp. We knowed ye'd got a wound. We searched for ye after the rest had given it up. That's how it came jest right for my revenge on Big Bow. I might 'a' killed the cuss afore, but 'twould had to be done too suddin! Bah! what would *sich* revenge be? Ye riled me when ye interfered, but 'twas well enough."

"My comrade who ran through the swamp escaped, I think."

"Yes. White Serpent led the s'arch to favor 'im. He'll git off. But *t'other* one's done for."

"Did you see him?"

"Jest as the skulp was yerked from 'is head—yes. He was a fool to fire as he did. What made 'im?"

Chapin explained.

"But he didn't *kill* Injun Heart," replied the other. "He wounded 'im bad, that's all. Had all that grudge ag'in' 'im, did he? Why didn't he wait? White Serpent *does*, an' would hate the man who'd be satisfied with the *suddin* death of Bill Rojers! If ye ever see that hellion in his power, ye'll think *my* way of revenge is child's play! The renegade broke his life in two—'twas years ago, I conclude. Ye heerd what he said. 'Tain't long sence he found out his man. What was *you* chaps up to?"

"The settlements begin to suspect an uprising. We had been watching the late movements hereabouts, and have warned some of the garrisons of our suspicions. But they treat the matter lightly."

"They'll see afore a week's over. We've done what we could to warn 'em without drawin' suspicion on ourselves. But even *we* hain't l'arnt the extent of the plot. We're mostly workin' on our own."

"Did you notice the Frenchman that came into camp shortly before we were discovered?"

"I'd seen 'im afore. A crafty knave, tool of some of them cussed Jesuits, I s'pose. We 'tend to sich when they come in our way. What do you know of him?"

"He has been to the settlement where I have my home. A spy, no doubt. I'm in a bad fix. How long do you think it will be before I can get about?"

"In ten days, mebbe, if ye do well. Mebbe longer. Thar's no use o' whinin'; you'll have to bear it—alone, most o' the time. But ye won't lack for reasonable comfort, an' one on us 'll manage to visit ye—"

The speaker was interrupted by a peculiar sound near the place of egress from the cave, as though some one had attempted to enter, and failed! He sprung from the youth's side. The torch had become dim, and the latter could barely see Silent Tongue as he stopped in the distance. The strange man moved a stone aside and disappeared. As he did so, young Chapin caught the echo of what seemed a human groan!

For a few moments he listened with intense and painful interest. What was the meaning of the groan? Something unusual must have happened. The action of Silent Tongue attested this.

Half an hour passed, and the torch went out, leaving total darkness. In spite of himself, Chapin began to experience a fearful dread. He owed his life to White Serpent and his comrade; but his soul shrunk from their bloody deeds. They had suffered fearful wrongs; but their system of cold-blooded revenge disgusted and shocked him. Yet his life was in their hands. What if something should happen to them? What if, intent upon their terrible work, they should forget his situation, and leave him to die, helpless and alone?

His previous horror, his loss of blood, and the discouraging thought that he was doomed to many days of inaction, produced this morbid state of mind. But it was dissipated at last. Some one was entering the passage. It proved to be Silent Tongue, who lighted another torch, and then came to Chapin's side.

"I must be off," he said, abruptly. "Now, hark. Y'ur wound won't need to be looked to under a couple o' days, an' y that time one on us'll see ye. Ye can use y'ur arms, an' 'l be able to set up arter ye've took a good sleep. I'm goin' to put provisions an' water in reach, an' here's a couple o' bearskins ye kin pull over ye, if ye like. I'll stick the torch in this crevice—an' here's more handy, along with flint, steel, an' tinder. Ye'll know when it's mornin,' for light'll shine through an aperture in the rocks nigh where I pass out. Ye'll see how to get out o' this y'urself if any thing should—*happen to us!* In that case, do the best ye kin!"

He was moving away, but turned at the call of Chapin.

"Be quick, young chap—what more?" he said. "White Serpent'll expect the signal-cry, and must not be kept waiting."

"What was the groan I heard when you went out before? What are you about to do? Alone here, I—"

"Alone? What of it? Do ye want tendin' like a sick baby? I'll tell ye about the groan. The White Serpent carried Big Bow on his shoulder to a certain spot near the Shawnee camp, leavin' me to tend you so't too much time wouldn't be lost. When he was comin' back here a strollin' warrior got a glimpse o' him, an' follered 'im, ha! ha!—follered 'im into an ambush nigh the entrance out here. Mebbe ye kin guess about the groan. I helped carry the cur's body, an' it's now side o' Big Bow's. I'm goin' thar now, an' shall utter the White Serpent's cry of triumph an' defiance. That'll bring the warriors out, an' Red Snake'll be among the leaders! They'll find the bodies, an' then—ha! ha!—how they'll look, an' watch, an' fear! Whar'll *I* be? Among 'em, an' unnoticed—how can they think o' suspectin' *me*? Ah, ha! won't I gloat over the sight o' their anger an' dread?"

The fell spirit of revenge again fully possessed the man. With a savage laugh he hurried forward and in a moment the wounded youth was again left alone with his pain and anxiety!

CHAPTER IV.

EUNICE WILDE.

WE pass over a brief period of days succeeding the events last described.

They had been days replete with momentous and bloody events through our north-western border. The great plot of that sagacious Indian statesman, Pontiac, had culminated. Fort after fort, or rather all—if we except three—were simultaneously besieged and taken. Frightful butcheries followed, blood flowed like a river; Indian passion and revenge ran riot. Solitary, courageous settlers fled to the nearest settlements; some of these in turn fled *en masse* eastward of the mountains, while others, receiving accessions to their numerical strength, and being situated favorably to withstand attack, stood their ground, constantly keeping good scouts in the forests to watch and report, as danger lessened or became more imminent.

Among these was Rochverde settlement—deriving its name from a hardy pioneer who first located on the spot. It was the home of the three men whose adventures we have traced in the preceding chapter.

Dick Welch indeed escaped his enemies and reached the settlement in safety. His story created a sensation. He had no doubt that both his companions were slain. The treacherous Frenchman was execrated; and some of the men who had derided young Chapin's suspicions of the fellow's honesty, were now loudest in protesting how well they knew he was a spy and a scoundrel.

Young Chapin had no relatives there, to mourn over the news of his death. There was *one*, however, whose cheek paled, and whose breath came in gasps, as she heard the sad news. It was Eunice Wilde.

She was about eighteen, rather below medium height, but had a form of most graceful, womanly proportions. She was not beautiful at first sight; yet she *was* beautiful. The fact would slowly develop itself to a beholder—would become

fixed as acquaintance progressed. Her grace of action, tone of voice, good sense, sparkling humor, and natural dignity—these qualities invested her with a charm, and that charm was her beauty. All felt it, all *praised* it, except some few pioneer gallants who had not the philosophy to hide their chagrin because she refused their rude though honest offers of marriage.

She was an orphan girl, too. Her home was with the family who had adopted her—Wilde by name. Her own parentage was veiled in obscurity. These facts were hardly known outside the family, and those who accidentally learned them bestowed not a second thought on the subject.

Joseph Wilde, with his wife and adopted daughter, had emigrated to the place in company with others about a year previous to the time of which we write. He was well advanced in years, as his white hairs attested; but he was strong yet—a good worker and a good hunter. A strange man, withal. He worked vigorously in putting the settlement in a state of defense, but hesitated about changing his residence, which was a mile outside the main settlement.

“Let Wilde alone,” said many of his friends. “He won’t be urged, nor he won’t change ’is quarters till obleged tew. No doubt he’ll keep ’is eyes about ’im, an’ come among us in time ef thar’s tew be an attack.”

The probability that poor Clute had made an end of the much dreaded Indian Heart, was a source of relief to the settlers. And in none was this more apparent than in Joseph Wilde. Some few noticed a peculiar expression on Wilde’s face when Dick Welch related this incident of his adventures. But the circumstance was not particularly mentioned nor heeded till afterward.

As days passed, bringing no attack, the settlers began to breathe easier. At distances more or less remote from the settlement, scouts still kept unceasing vigil. None of these, however, had penetrated to the region whence Dick Welch had providentially escaped. Two men undertook it at last, receiving full directions from Dick, who, though the very one to have accompanied them, was prevented from doing so by illness.

These men were not regular inmates of the settlement. Much of their time was spent in wandering from place to

place, securing furs for the traders, and enjoying that free, roving life which many white men of those days loved as well as their Indian neighbors.

One of them was about forty years of age; a tall, powerfully-built man, with a grave though pleasant countenance, and an eye which a beholder would trust at once. His companion was much younger; nearly as tall as himself, extremely awkward in his movements, but withal a good hunter and scout. These two had been inseparable companions for years.

In less than two days from the time of setting out, they had penetrated to the place described. The Shawnee camp was still occupied. Evidently about thirty warriors, young and old, were there. No signs of a predatory movement were visible. Once they descried the Frenchman, Dureau, as he passed into a rude tent. They hovered about the camp for some time and endeavored to overhear some of the Indian talk! But it was without avail. A strange apathy seemed to possess the warriors.

On the morning of the third day the two adventurers began to retrace their steps toward the settlement. It was considerably past noon when their quick ears detected sounds of an approaching party. Hastily moving aside, they secreted themselves, and watched the forest. Presently eight dark figures came in full view conducting a female prisoner. The two whites had barely a moment's time to scan them before they passed behind an abrupt rocky knoll, such as were common in the vicinity. The younger man looked at his comrade.

"Shawnee!" he said.

"Ay, Brom; with a prisoner, as ye seen," replied the other. "B'en up to thar murderin' tricks—the same old story, cuss em. Cum from the diriction of the settlemint, tew. Look sharp when they pass from ahind yonder. I hardly got a glimpse of the gal, but seems 's 'ough I've sot eyes on 'er afore."

But the moments sped and no Indians appeared. Doubtless, the latter had halted beyond the knoll, where flowed the waters of a little creek.

As soon as the two men became reasonably assured of this they glided forward and cautiously crept up to the summit of the elevation. Peering through a low fringe of bushes, they

saw the eight Shawnees, some of them busy in getting the materials for a fire, others preparing pieces of venison for the process of broiling. In their midst was the captive girl, sitting near a tree, her head bowed upon her lap, and her bosom heaving from the effects of fright and fatigue. Long tresses of beautiful brown hair flowed about her neck and shoulders, completely hiding even a side view of her face. They at once recognized her, however, as Eunice Wilde.

"Ye see, Brom," said the elder man; "sunthin' like this come ter my mind when I fust see it was a woman they'd get. Comin' right from the direcshun of the gal's home—ten to one that it's the cussed Frencher's duins!"

"It's strange, Rhodan," replied the other in a low whisper. "Don't ye s'pose they orter be'n follered?"

"*Mebbe* they hain't b'en. 'Twouldn't be so strange. Not so hard to surprise Wilde. He wouldn't be urged to move 'is traps into the main place of safety, ye know. They might take 'im easy an' git off 'ithout 'rousin' the rest on 'em. 'Twould be no great wonder if the settlers don't know it yit."

"They ortew. Eff them chaps that scout nigher the settlement—I don't see how these skunks got *by* 'em with the gal. Didn't seem to care much herself, sen' the news of Ed Chapin's death."

"It's jest the way with sich ones. She was a sperited gal, but see 'er now! Ay, I expected it! D'ye see them gray scalp-locks hangin' from one of the Injuns' girdles? Them belonged to the old folks—both on 'em murdered!"

"What's ter be done, Rhodan?" whispered Brom, excitedly. "Thar's eight on 'em, but they mustn't git clear with that young woman. I'll lay my bones afore they do!"

"Keep cool, Brom. We'll consider fust, an' try ter make up by stratagum what we kain't do by numbers. Fust place, we'll hev ter wait an' watch. These demons hev got to stop a while on the gal's account. They're takin' her to the camp we left this mornin'. But 'tain't likely they'll git thar to-night, 'cos, it's late now. They'll make another tramp, an' we must dog 'em till they camp fur the night. Then'll be our time, when, by the help of Proverdenche, I hope to sarcumvent the whole p'ison scrape on 'em. Take care! Some of the scoundrels hev got thar blasted eyes this way!"

The two crouched lower, and continued to watch the warriors. Half an hour thus passed, when the latter finished their repast, the prisoner refusing to partake of the food offered her.

"They're fixin' for a start!" whispered Brom, excitedly. "Good! I'm gittin' tired of this."

"We must git back from this, an' hide further down the knoll," said Rhodan. "They'll make a turn when they start an' mout see up hyar."

He drew carefully back with his companion. In doing so, the latter accidentally displaced a loose stone lying near him, and it went tumbling down the slope with considerable noise!

Rhodan clasped the arm of his friend, and both remained motionless, watching their foes. The latter sprung to cover, and gazed suspiciously toward the knoll. In a moment four of them separated from their fellows—two dodging quickly toward the right and two toward the left, in order to pass around either extremity of the little hill. The other four remained in front awaiting events.

They moved as soon as the savages. The forest in the immediate vicinity of the knoll was quite open; but they hoped to gain a denser part further away, without being seen or heard. They were disappointed in this. Fierce yells from either point told them they were discovered.

"Now, we must run for it!" cried Rhodan.

And the next moment they plunged into the denser recesses of the woods. Several shots were fired after them. Rhodan was untouched, but Brom got a bullet through his ankle. It did not seem to affect his speed, however, for he kept on with his friend.

The ground over which they were running was a little ascending and extremely rough. Athwart their course lay fallen trees, rocks, and tangled bushes—the *débris* of the forest. A hundred yards behind came their pursuers, filling the forest-aisles with fierce cries!

Nearly a mile was thus passed, while, as yet, neither party gained in the race. But on a sudden Rhodan noticed that his companion began to lag.

"What's the matter? Kain't be y'ur wind's givin' out?" he said, anxiously.

"No; it's my ankle," returned the other. "'Twas struck by one of thar bullets when we fust started. I didn't mind it then, but it begins to bother me."

"Don't show lame. Keep up a little while longer, if it's possible," said Rhodan. "Thar's another ridge yender ways. Once behind it we'll pull up an' see—"

"Crack!" came the report of a rifle, the bullet grazing the old man's shoulder, and cutting short his speech.

"Thet's y'ur game, is it?" he exclaimed, wheeling toward the pursuers. The moment he did so his rifle came to line with a jerk, and its report was almost simultaneous. A savage was seen to drop, and the rest instantly halted, seeking good cover.

Rhodan himself did the same, and, as he began rapidly to reload, spoke to his friend.

"Go on, Brom—git ahind the ridge, an' save y'ur shot till thar's a better chance or more necessity. I'll beat the demons loadin' an' j'ine ye soon."

Brom hurried on. He was fast becoming lame, and knew that unless he could get in a position to fight without running, he would fall an easy prey to the pursuers.

As he gained the desired place, Rhodan joined him. The latter was not pursued. He knew the Shawnees would not come on direct in the face of their deadly rifles.

"It's easy to tell what thar game 'll be *now*," said Rhodan. "How bad is y'ur hurt, Brom; *kain't* ye run furdur?"

"'Tain't to be denied, Rhodan. Thar's no use o' *both* bein' took. You kin—"

"Then we'll see how we kin fix for a defince *here*," interrupted Rhodan, glancing about. His eye fell upon a rift in the rocks at his feet. He bent down, examined it for a moment, and then darted past his friend to the foot of the rocky pile.

At this moment yells were heard not far away, and they were quickly answered by others still further back, showing that the rest of the party, or a part of those remaining with the girl, were rapidly coming up.

"Here!" cried Rhodan; but Brom was already beside him, and saw an opening under the rocks large enough to admit a man's body.

"Will it do, Rhodan?"

"Hustle *in*. I ain't mistaken. Thar's nothin' better, considerin' *your* fix. They'll be in sight of us in three minutes."

Brom instantly obeyed. After creeping a few feet he found more room, and at last was able to stand nearly upright. Faint streaks of light came through crevices in the rocks above, relieving what otherwise would have been total darkness. Rhodan came close behind, having moved a large fragment of rock sufficiently to cover the entrance to their retreat. But, as a further precaution, both began to move other pieces of loose rock lying at their feet, filling the passage behind them. They were, however, soon obliged to pause in their work, for movements were heard outside.

Now came the critical moment. Would the Shawnees suspect their foes were concealed there, or that the latter had fled while screened by the interposing rocks?

The question was quickly answered. A peculiar yell was heard from one of the Indians outside, announcing some discovery. A moment later the ledge was deserted.

"How did you manage it, Rhodan?" said his friend.

"Ye see them tall briers nigh one end o' this ledge? I bent 'em—jest as we naturally would ef we hurried through 'em. A few shreds o' my hunting-shirt was left thar, too. Come on. The water runs through hyaraway when thar's a big freshet, and must hev an *in* as well as *out*!"

They moved on in the uncertain light, seeking a place of egress from the opposite base of the ledge. The passage decreased in size, obliging them to crawl on their hands and knees. They could look through an aperture ahead, which opened out into the forest. They reached it, but it was too small to admit of their egress. Both in turn tried to squeeze through but found this impossible!

Here was a dilemma. They might turn back along the passage, remove the stones and pass out where they had entered; but ere they could accomplish this some of the Indians might be returning. There was little hope of the latter being long deceived by the ruse of the whites. They might or might not suspect and discover the subterranean passage. Only on his friend's account had Rhodan Bates run this risk, feeling that it was a lesser one than that of open flight.

These thoughts did not interfere with action. The aperture before the two men was about half-breast high. They endeavored to enlarge its width by chipping off with the heads of their hatchets. By the merest accident, one of them discovered a seam, a few inches from the main aperture. That portion of the rock was of a shaly nature—different from the pile of hard bowlders above it, which seemed to have been washed by the floods of centuries upon its bed. The strength of both soon pried away a portion of this rock, leaving an aperture sufficiently wide for their purpose. And before the Shawnees had been twenty minutes away, those whom they sought had emerged on the opposite side of the ledge, a little bruised, and reeking with perspiration!

With characteristic forethought, the old borderer concealed, as best he could, their place of egress. This occupied but a moment, and then both moved off. Had his friend been in condition to aid, Rhodan would have hastened back and undertook to rescue the girl. He had no doubt that only two Indians had remained with her.

His thoughts were suddenly diverted from this channel. The Indians were already returning! He could hear rapid bounds approaching from beyond the opposite side of the ledge. He foresees their strategy in a flash! They have discovered the cheat—they know their enemies are somewhere in the rear. Some of them are about to search the ledge; while others are off on a circuit sufficiently large to intercept the fugitives, should the latter be not found concealed there!

Rhodan and his friend were not more than half a dozen rods from the ledge when the Indians were heard. To run, or attempt to steal off without being seen, was out of the question; for in a minute the Shawnees would be upon the ledge! Rhodan himself could have defied pursuit; but Brom could not, and to leave *him*—he did not think of it.

"Hug down hyar—quick!" he whispered. "Thar ain't no better place to be had!"

They crouched side by side into a little hollow of the forest. There were trees close by them, but, as happened, none of sufficient size to hide their bodies from the Indians in front, not to speak of those who might come at any moment from either flank. And the hollow itself was little better. A quantity

of brush and leaves had drifted into it, among which they ensconced themselves. Even now they are but little below a line of sight from the ridge.

Notwithstanding their precarious hiding-place, Rhodan has some faith in it. The idea of enemies trusting to so frail a shelter may not occur to the Shawnees.

Suddenly the Indians are heard upon the ledge. A few moments pass, when, "thump! thump!" come sounds, caused, as the scouts know, by stones taken from the entrance to the passage and hurled aside! Then follow two distinct, ringing yells! Clearly, the scamps have not only discovered a passage under the rocks, but believe their human game is caged!

The yells are at once answered from points not far remote. Soon the Indians who have been searching on the flanks, arrive at full speed. Two of them pass within ten feet of the hidden scouts. A few moments afterward comes the third; and now five Shawnees are eagerly consulting upon the ledge. One lies in the distance, killed or wounded, and two remain back with the prisoner, awaiting the result of the chase.

Is it not a good time for the scouts to steal off, while their enemies are busy at the ledge? Rhodan slightly raises his head to ascertain. Impossible. Some of the Indians are every moment upon the summit, and would at once note the slightest movement among the trees.

Suddenly a summons to come out and surrender is heard, delivered in broken English. Despite their situation, the features of the scouts relax, for a moment, into smiles, as they hear it. Of course, no answer is returned, and the Indians commence work. A quantity of dry branches is collected and crowded into the mouth of the passage. This occupies some time. When all is ready fire is communicated. At this moment there is an addition to the party—a gaudily-attired savage, leader of the party, evidently, who had remained in charge of the girl.

He is quickly informed of the situation, and directs the movements of the rest. The fire is now burning briskly and being fed by green branches cut from bushes close by, must create a dense smoke within the passage. The Indians stand by, awaiting the expected *dénouement* with exultant looks.

"I b'lieve we mout resk changin' our quarters, now," w^h

pered Rhodan, coolly. "They'll soon l'arn how they've been fooled, an' begin a s'arch hyarabouts out o' pure madness. But they'll give up *the ledge*. We'll try to git to this eend on't whar thar's a good hidin'-place. Yis—come on, Brom—thar's sca'cely a mite o' danger thet the fools'll be lookin' this way fur siv'ral minnits to come!"

Keeping their eyes toward the spot where, now and then, the head of an Indian could be seen through the smoke beginning to rise, our two adventurers crawled, serpent-like, away, and in three minutes were more securely hidden at one end of the ledge.

"Now let the fools work," said Rhodan. "The longer they hang 'round thar, the better it'll be fur us. They'll think we've had plenty o' time to git off, an' *mebbe*, won't spend more time on the s'arch."

"It's tew bad," said Brom. "It'll be ag'in' our chances for gittin' off Eunice Wilde—this will. An' hyar's this wound! Cuss that Injun's bullet!"

As he spoke, yells of disappointment and rage rung out through the forest.

"*Thet* tells it!" said Rhodan. "They've found thar game is gone. Hear 'em! Ah, ha! lie close, Brom; I'm sartin some on 'em ar' comin' this way!"

But Rhodan was mistaken. The movement he heard was made by those who searched for and discovered the place where the whites had left the rocks. This was so near their present place of concealment that the scouts could plainly hear their foes, as the latter held angry council. In the midst of this, a single loud, ferocious whoop was heard in the distance. The two scouts looked into each other's faces with wonder.

Exclamations of surprise were heard from the savages above, and suddenly all of them darted away at their highest speed!

CHAPTER V.

THE HEAD TRAIL.

FOR a few moments the borderers neither spoke nor moved. Each was trying to account for the distant whoop. Rhodan at last glided cautiously from cover, his friend limping after him. The Indians were out of sight.

"What did that last yell mean, Rhodan?" queried Brom.

"I kain't a'count for't 'less 'twas caused by the gal. Mebbe she tried ter git away. She's one that 'u'd *try* it ef a chance offered."

"She'd 'a' hardly tried it, I think. She c'u'dn't 'a' got tew rods."

"She must 'a' tried 'er hand ag'in' the red skunk in some way, thet's sartin. She mistrusts it's the Frencher's duins, an' 'u'd rather die than git in his power, likely—'speshuly sence she's heerd o' Chapin's death. But come—thar's water hyaraway. Y'ur wound must be looked to fust thing."

His friend limped after him to the side of a little water-course. Rhodan washed the blood carefully from the injury, and applied to it certain leaves gathered near by, with whose properties he was acquainted. The operation did not take long. Meantime the two conversed rapidly and earnestly.

"Ye see it's fur the best, Brom," said Rhodan, as the two rose.

"I s'pose 'tis," answered the other, moodily. "'Twas my car'lissniss that brought on this tussle. Ef it knocks me out o' y'ur company, and keeps me from duin' sunthin' for the young woman, I hedn't orter complain on my *own* account. 'Cos I kain't *help*—that's it."

"Y'ur in no shape ter help on the trail—y'ur wound forbids thet," said Rhodan. "But you kin git back to the sittle-mint, and mebbe 'll meet and direct them thet ar' on the track of these demons. *Thet* 'll be helpin' the gal, the only way ye *kin* help 'er. I'll keep on the track of these. Ef a chance offers—but thar won't, likely. I shall watch 'em, camp nigh

'em, an' dog 'em to the Shawnee camp. Ef it ain't *growed* sence we left it, an' help gits thar in time, I 'ain't much doubt but we kin manage to snatch the gal. Say so to them ye meet, ef ye meet *any*, as I hope ye may. 'Twon't do to wait hyar longer. We must siparate!"

There was something touching in the way these two graspe hands, looking for a moment into each other's eyes. The Brom suddenly turns. "Take care o' y'urself!"

It is all he trusts himself to utter, as he moves off. Rhoda watched him till his figure was lost from view behind a distant forest swell. Then he himself turned, and cautiously moved forward on the trail of the Shawnee raiders.

In an hour the old borderer had the Indians in view. They were not moving very fast. Besides the girl, two of their own number seemed badly wounded, and received assistance on the march. One of these Rhoda could account for; but *who* had wounded the other? Conjecture becomes almost certainty now. It must have been the girl.

These facts accounted for their moving so slowly. Evidently they believed the white scouts had been glad enough to escape without again turning to dog their steps. Two of the party, however, hovered a short distance away on either flank, and at some distance in the rear of the rest. This necessitated great prudence on the part of Rhoda. But he managed to keep them in view without arousing a suspicion that they were followed.

Mile after mile was passed, and a gloom began to settle in the forest. The two Indians gradually drew in from either flank, joining the main party. The old borderer was enabled to get nearer them without danger. But at last they came to a large natural opening across which he could not immediately follow them without great danger of being seen.

He judged they would soon camp for the night. He wished to be near them when they should do so. If not, his attempts to discover their exact location afterward might be heard in the reigning stillness, and arouse suspicion. But if he should wait till the Indians could cross the opening, they might camp beyond before he could get near them.

He resolved on the expedient of *head-trailing*. That is, to *hasten off on a circuit* which would bring him directly *ahead*

of them, on their probable course. Then, guided by eye and ear, to retreat as they should advance. Naturally they would not suspect an enemy *ahead*; and, favored by darkness, he might be very near them when they should halt.

This project he began to carry out. It was dark, or nearly so, when he halted, feeling that he was but little ahead of the party. Nothing was heard of them, however. Had they already formed a camp?

Looking a short distance toward the right he saw through the gloom a forest elevation from which he might the better see or hear any movements or sounds made in the vicinity. He noiselessly gained the summit, and found it quite a plateau. It was almost barren of foliage, except near the center, where grew a cluster of low cedars. Beyond these an abrupt, slaty embankment rose to the height of several feet and sloped away, forming the opposite descent of the elevation. He passed the cedars, and was advancing toward the embankment, when he heard subdued Indian voices, and almost at the same moment saw the gaudy head-dress of a savage appear above the ridge!

To retreat unobserved was impossible. Instead, Rhodan darted *forward*. The embankment screened him as he advanced. With a lightning look, he saw where the party would naturally descend upon the plateau. Withdrawing as far to one side of the place as he had time to do, he dropped flat to the ground.

The next moment the party with their wounded and prisoner passed down within five yards of where he lay. With a thrill of relief he saw them move forward till they entered the cluster of cedars!

It is not so dark but that he can see them moving about. They have found a good camping-place, and arranged rude couches for their prisoner and wounded comrades.

Sanguine joys and hopes filled the breast of the borderer. Perhaps he calls to mind an adventure of his earlier years, when, assisted by one Eli Thorpe, he rescued the latter's betrothed from the hands of her would-be abductor and his evil allies.

And here is an adventure somewhat similar! Fortune has placed him in the very position he had wished. For,

since starting on this trail, and especially after learning that two of the Indians were disabled, he had been concocting a plan by which, alone, to rescue the prisoner!

The Indians soon settle into quiet. They make no fire, post no sentinels. They evidently believe the last precaution unnecessary. Why not? Two of their number had scouted in the rear a full hour before reaching this spot. They are in a sheltered place. Dismissing all fears concerning the two scouts, one of whom they had wounded three hours before, they had little need of caution, more than that of quiet repose in their present natural shelter.

Rhodan feels elated as he thus interprets the situation. And now he braces himself to await with patience the decisive hour.

The hours dragged slowly. It was past midnight before Rhodan ventured to crawl near the outer circle of cedars. When he did so he learned an unpleasant truth. One of the wounded warriors was awake, and was *kept* so by pain!

For two long hours Rhodan watched the fellow. At times he would rise to a sitting posture, remain so a few moments, and then lie down again. Occasionally he would utter a groan, but so low as not to arouse the rest, who were apparently in deep slumber. He could distinguish the figure of the girl, but knew not whether she was asleep or awake.

Rhodan's anxiety was deep—his chagrin keen, as will be imagined. Would not the fellow at last sleep? Otherwise any attempt in behalf of the prisoner would be worse than useless.

The moments sped on. Instead of the wounded warrior's showing symptoms of drowsiness, he seems more *wakeful*! And, at last, rising painfully, he limps out of the midst of his companions.

Luckily, the latter were not aroused. Rhodan, however, came near being discovered by the warrior. Only the latter's great pain prevented it. He moved a short distance away, and finally dropped into the wild grass, without apparent motive, half-crazy with pain. This was soon ended, for, the moment he dropped, a dark figure sprung over him, a knife pierced his heart, and two strong hands smothered all groans that might have escaped!

"Ay—one the less! The poor varmint's no longer in the way o' sp'ilin' an honest man's endivors, an' no longer in pain; Ef Brom war hyar on 'is pins, we'd finish the hull pizen lot!"

The soliloquy of the old borderer, as, with compressed lips and snake-like motion, he again approaches the sleeping circle of warriors. Not one of them has awakened. And now he feels the decisive time has come!

Rising gradually upright, he steps within the circle and finds himself near the girl, who is as motionless as her captors. For a brief moment Rhodan glances over them. A wild impulse to attempt the slaying of them all before they can make resistance, is quickly cast aside. They are too far apart—half of them would be roused to their feet at the outset!

But to waken the girl without causing her to give alarm! He stoops over her and *she moves!* It is only her hands, however—*held up* to enable him to assist her! She has not only awakened; but, by a subtle instinct, feels that a friend is near!

Noiselessly the bonds about her wrists are severed; as noiselessly is she raised in Rhodan's strong arms; and, in a few seconds, he has borne her as many yards outside. With a whispered warning, he puts her down, snatches up his rifle, and then both hurry to the embankment. Once beyond it, they can make all possible haste without danger of being heard.

They scramble up; but, suddenly, an Indian darts from the cedars, discovers their forms outlined upon the bank, and gives the cry of alarm!

The next instant Rhodan is springing away with Ennice Wilde. Bitter disappointment—terrible chagrin; but these do not confuse him. A few swift bounds bring them among straggling trees, a belt of which extends to the foot of the slope, terminating in the dark forest. Rhodan sees they can not reach this before the Indians will have them in sight through the gloom. Then, to escape with the girl would be simply impossible.

These thoughts flash through Rhodan's mind and suggest an expedient—to conceal the girl in a tree favorable for the purpose, just before them. He informed her of his purpose while carrying it out. And it was carried out before the Shawnees appeared over the bank!

Rhodan throws himself upon the ground near the tree

whose foliage hides the prisoner. The next moment dusky forms loom into view and rush down the slope, scattering as they run. Rhodan has found a loose stone, which he hurls noiselessly forward. As it strikes and bounds from the earth below, several of the Indians rush by him with dog-like yells. Have all of them gone by? If so, he may assist the girl down, and hurry her directly *back* through the camp!

This is his only hope of escape for her. He begins to glide nearer the tree. Suddenly, shouts from below are answered from above, and the tread of feet is so near that he is again obliged to lay close to the ground.

Then there came a silence which caused him great anxiety. Did the Indians suspect he was hidden with the girl somewhere within the belt of timber?

Minutes passed, till they grew into a half-hour. The ominous silence continues. It begins to be unbearable to Rhodan. He knows it can mean but one thing. Six able-bodied warriors are posted in a circuit; they are convinced he and his *protégé* are within it, and will wait till daylight shall reveal *both*! Daylight is near; for already is the gloom lifting from the thinly-wooded slope!

All the instincts of the scout are now aroused to effect his own release; since to do this with the girl is no longer possible.

Knowing that he can not move without betraying his exact position, he resolves on a *coup de main*.

Rising, he darts toward the right, but is at once confronted by a warrior, who utters an exultant shout. Rhodan strikes the fellow down with his clenched hand, and leaps over his body. But before he has taken half a dozen steps, he receives a blow from behind which fells him to the earth!

For some time the scout remained unconscious. He came to his senses at last, and saw it was fully light. He had been dragged outside the belt of trees. Two of the Shawnees were standing near. Where were the rest? Had the girl remained undiscovered?

A rustle at his side answered the question. She was sitting near him, and now bent forward so that he could see her face. It was deathly pale, though not utterly despairing.

"Brave, generous man!" she said. "It is hard that you must die in the attempt to save me!"

"Don't speak o' thet, young woman," said the borderer. "Mebbe my time hain't come yit; though I've allus made it a p'int to hold myself in readiness. I'd make the attempt ag'in, all the same. How'd they find ye?"

"By my dress. You see it is nearly white. It gave a clue to *your* whereabouts, too. But you had a companion?"

"An' they're lookin' fur 'im now, I s'pose, but they won't find 'im," said Rhodan, who briefly informed her of his past movements.

He had barely done this, when one of the Indians turned, and, with a fierce scowl, threatened him with his hatchet. But a signal-note far down the slope diverted the Indian's attention, and he stepped back.

"We won't hev a chance to converse much, young woman," said Rhodan, "so let's make the best on't. Keep up y'ur sperits. Whatever happins to *me*, I'm sartin thar's them 'at'll work as hard fur y'ur safety as I hev."

"God bless you, noble man; I'll try. This is the work of that Frenchman who was at the settlement. I feel it. Once in his power, who can shield me? But I may *free myself* if the worst comes. Would it be wrong?"

The scout understood the desperate act of which she hinted.

"I dar'n't advise ye on thet, girl," he said. "Mebbe the wust won't come. Trust 'n a Higher Power. Did ye try to git away yisterday?"

"Yes; when all but one of the wretches were after you. I snatched a knife from the one in charge of me and gave him quite a wound; but he was too quick for me. Ah!—the rest are coming!"

Four Indians joined the little group. He who seemed leader of the band, looked curiously upon the prostrate scout. Then he brought his moccasined foot against him with no gentle force.

"Waugh!" he ejaculated, fiercely. "Me know now. *You—White Serpent!* Good! Silent Creep glad see you!"

Then he spoke a few words to his companions, who knew not the English tongue. They looked upon Rhodan exultingly.

"I'll hev to ondeceive ye, Silent Creep," said Rhodan, addressing the savage by his acquired name. "'Tain't White

Serpent ye've got, though I hain't a doubt ye'd be glad ef 'twas so. 'Cos I know y'ur tribe dreads 'im. I know this from report, though I never seen 'im. So ye've mistook clean through."

Silent Creep communicated with his followers again. Their looks at once changed.

"All same," resumed Silent Creep, turning again to Rhodan. "You'll burn jes' as good at stake! How s'pose bear t, eh?"

"No better, nor so well, as ye would y'urself," was the calm rejoinder. "When the wust comes, I'll b'ar it with sich fortitude as is in me, thet's all. No one, whether white or Injun, kin do **more**."

"Has white warrior not got name?" inquired Silent Creep, derisively. "If has, what call 'im?"

"I've a Christian name, an' prefar it among my own kind," replied the old scout. "I've another too, which mebbe you Shawnees hev heard. It was started by the Injuns, an' somehow it *sticks*, though 'tain't my way ter take pride in't. It's *Scarred Eagle*."

This announcement caused nearly as much exultation among them as had the belief, a moment before, that they had captured the noted White Serpent. The latter was a source of more dread; but Scarred Eagle was a formidable enemy. Such a prize would amply pay for the loss of a common warrior.

"Good!" said Silent Creep, again, this time with more of respect in his tone. "Come for git white squaw, eh? We take good care *her*! She brave—too brave! Try for kill warrior. Make good squaw for *Injun Heart*, all same!"

The eyes of Eunice Wilde met those of the Indian, as he made this startling disclosure! A shudder passed over her. But the borderer betrayed not the least surprise.

"Scarred Eagle had friend," said Silent Creep. "Where is he gone?"

"You'll sca'ce expict I'm one ter tell ye whar his body is," returned Rhodan, promptly. "One o' y'ur warriors hit 'im in the scrimmage we had yisterd'y. A dead skulp 'u'd do ye no gre't honor arter the way we'd gi'n ye the slip. A white, ~~as well's~~ a red, perfars to take his long sleep with it on. But

the forest is afore ye. Look fur the body if ye will ; but I doubt y'ur findin' it."

The wary borderer felt justified in thus deceiving his enemies. He knew they were yet several miles from the main camp. He had some hope that a party from the settlement, directed possibly by Brom, would come up in time to intercept these.

But Silent Creep did not linger. The slain Indian was laid upon a rude litter ; the thongs were cut from Rhodan's ankles, and forthwith the entire party started toward the Shawnee camp.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHADOW OVER THE CAMP.

WE pass over a brief period of hours, and look in upon the Shawnee camp which Rhodan and Brom had left the previous morning.

About a score of warriors, young and old, were scattered over the grass-plot forming the center of the encampment. Some of these were reclining, as though feeble from the effects of recent wounds. Others were chatting, smoking, or bur-nishing their weapons, as inclination or necessity prompted. A feeling of security seemed to prevail ; yet a close scrutiny of the savages, their occasional keen glances into the forest, east, betokened an expected arrival.

Only two squaws were to be seen among the group. One of these, quite aged and scrawny in appearance, presented striking contrast to the other, who could not have been more than seventeen winters. And yet there was a resemblance between the two. Some traces of the younger's beautiful outline of form and feature, seen in the person of the old squaw, attested relationship--mother and daughter, probably.

These two stood near an aged warrior, with whom they were conversing in low, earnest words. The warrior himself seemed to be suffering from recent wounds, for his head was

bandaged and he talked feebly. But a close look into his dark eyes would have revealed fierce anger.

There are more about the camp than those we have noted. Several rude tents are visible, doubtless containing inmates.

In one of these two persons are conversing. Their manner is not excited, but their words are earnest. Evidently they are chary of being overheard; for, besides talking low, a dusky warrior stands outside the tent-door, who watches that none approach too near.

There is a great difference in the looks of these men. One appears to be about thirty years of age. He is tall, slim, and agile-looking. His face has a sinister cast, which the almost constant smile he wears does not improve. On the contrary, it makes the face look *more* sinister. He is dressed well—even tastefully.

This is Will Dureau, the French emissary, who had hung around the Rochverde settlement. And if his looks are sinister, his whole appearance forbidding, he can gaze upon his companion and truthfully feel that he is greatly the other's inferior in villainy.

That companion is no other than the infamous "Indian Heart." "White skin but Injun heart!"—this had been the comment of the Indians, years before, when Bill Rogers, forfeiting his life among his *own* kind, became an outcast among *them*! He had not been long in earning that comment; and, naturally enough, it became his title.

It would require a close look to discover that he was *not* an Indian. The color of his skin, his gait, dress and equipments—all proclaimed him one. He *was* one in all essential elements—as passionate, as revengeful, as *bloodthirsty* as the *worst*!

The wound he had received from poor Clute was not dangerous, though aggravating, in a double sense: because, aside from the pain, it necessitated inaction and quiet. The first requisite was forced; the second, impossible! His terrible passions raged for several days so strongly, that his wound, despite good treatment, grew worse. Feeling a dread of the mysterious White Serpent; awaiting the return of those who searched for him in the forest; their fruitless endeavors to obtain the least clue of their terrible enemy—all this precluded

the idea of quiet to the renegade. He began to be as superstitious in regard to this secret foe as were his chosen allies.

For the past few days his wounds had begun to heal, and his strength to increase. There had been no commotion of late about the camp. It was well guarded, especially at *night*! and hardly a warrior would have dared to venture, *alone*, beyond its precincts.

The renegade intended to break camp soon. Many of his warriors had fallen in the late attacks upon the forts. Now that all these, or nearly all of them, were subdued, he would lead the remnant of his chosen followers in the work of spreading death and destruction wherever chance offered. But now he was awaiting the return of a subordinate chief—Silent Creep.

It is concerning the latter and his mission that the two are conversing.

"It is time Silent Creep was here," said the Frenchman.

"Waul!" replied Indian Heart, sententiously.

"You have not yet proclaimed before the warriors that she whom he brings is to be your squaw."

"Ain't thar time?" said the renegade. "Wait 'll 'e comes an' see ef 'e brings *her* thet 'e went aufter!"

"Do you think he can fail?" asked the other, anxiously.

"I thought him one of your best followers."

"Waul, 'e *is*! Gi'n me him fur any sich a trot 's thet 'e's on. It's what 'e's named fur. But 'e *mout* fail fur all thet?"

"*Diable!* I must have that girl! I *will* have her in some way, even if this trial fails. She's glorious!—my thought by day, my dream by night!"

"Bosh!" exclaimed the renegade, disgusted at the Frenchman's enthusiasm. "Why didn't ye git 'er y'urself, when ye wuz thar? Why didn't ye git some o' thar long-faced ministers ur priests ter marry ye, an' settle down—luk an honest 'un?"

"Because I *couldn't*, as I've told you. I tried hard enough. I saw that she wouldn't listen to any proposition I might make—so I made none."

"Waugh!" said Indian Heart. "So ye didn't dast, eh! 'Fraid uv 'er frown, wuz ye?"

"Not that; but afraid she might impute a refusal to what

has since happened—or what I *hope* has happened. It was necessary in order to carry out what I propose to; you see that?"

"I see 't she's uther a little fool, 'r else y'ur plan ain't a-goin' ter *work*. Mebbe she *is*. Mebbe she won't see through the hull on't when she gits 'ere—ef she ever *duz*."

"*Sacré!* Don't predict she won't. I can't bear the thought. Let us keep to the subject. I don't see why my plan should fail. She comes here and finds she is to be your wife! She shrinks from the idea. Feels horrified! I find a way to confer with her secretly. I am your prisoner; taken while strolling near *her* place; my French tongue saved me from death; I am suspected, despite my story, but am allowed liberty of the camp, subject to a watch. I lay a plan for her to escape—for me, for *both*! She will be glad to escape in any way. I will pretend to be trying to reach the English fort at Niagara—but I know where to meet Indians, who will befriend me by taking us both prisoners! Ha! ha! do you begin to see? Fortune will land us near some of the *missions* of my countrymen! Then, I can persuade her to marry—"

"Hold up a minit, Dureau!" interrupted Indian Heart. The Frenchman ceased rubbing his hands, and looked the other askance.

"It's *luk* y'ur kind ter *run on*," he resumed. "Marry! A Frencher, 'spesshully one luk you—*marry!* Y'ur don't mean tew. Y' 'ud make 'er y'ur squaw *here*, ef ye dared ter dew it."

"I'm in *earnest*," protested the Frenchman, laying his hand upon his heart. "With this English lily, I am good; I would make her mine by the aid of a priest. I don't joke!"

"It's baby talk ter me," grunted the renegade. "What der I care what ye dew with 'er? Bosh! What I want's ter *kanl* ye back a little. Ye've run over y'ur ground tew fast! Ye take every thing fur sartin. Mebbe she won't bl'ëve ye, spite uv y'ur pritty story. But ef she shou'd—how 're ye goin' ter git 'er off? Who's goin' ter help ye?"

"Who?" echoed Dureau. "You can secretly direct two or three of your warriors to assist. You will not refuse?"

"Au-haw! *Thet* I shall! I didn't promus 's fur 's *thet*. I resked the loss uv eight o' my warriors ter dew the main job fur ye. *Thet ar* 's 'nuff!"

"How! *Sacré!* Did you risk *all* that for me? Have I risked nothing for *you* in visiting different settlements to discover their strength? And will not Silent Creep, if he returns decide you, whether or not to attack the place? Is his mission *all* for my benefit?"

"Hev it so. It only makes us even. Now onderstan' I wish ye success; but the rest o' the plot ye must carry on, alone. I shain't mix in 't! 'Cos, why? The darter uv one o' my warriors, cousin uv Silent Creep, you've promused ter marry! She's a sperited 'un—a revingful 'un! She's a'ready jealous on ye! Y'ur conduct lately's made 'er s'spishus!"

"Is that why you refuse to aid me?"

"I a'low 'tis. 'Twouldn't be policy fur me ter try the warriors. They onderstan' you've promused y'urself ter Looeen. I c'u'dn't dew it. Ef I c'u'd 'twould offend 'er father, Silent Creep, an' the *hull* on 'em. Ye k'n see how 'twould be y'urself. 'Twould destr'y my influunce with the tribe!"

The Frenchman dropped his head, and looked blank. But suddenly he looked up, his eyes gleaming.

"You'll do what you have promised," he said. "You'll pretend you wan't the girl yourself?"

"I'll dew *that* much. I'll make it onderstood. Silent Creep hisself thinks so."

"Enough!" said Dureau. "A Frenchman is never without an expedient in love or war. I have one! Would you know it? Looine's rejected suitor—Low Trail! He sighs for her yet. He hates me with a vengeance. Good. I will change his hate; he will become my ally. I will seek him forthwith!"

He passed quickly out, surprising the guard near the tent door. He glanced suspiciously at the fellow; then passed on.

"Silent Tongue!" muttered Dureau. "A capital guard I thought he might be listening till I saw who he was!"

Dureau strolled carelessly to another part of the camp. He saw a young warrior sitting alone, who regarded him sullenly. Notwithstanding, Dureau paused and began to converse with him. After a few moments, the young Shawnee rose and followed him into a thicket. In a few minutes, Indian Heart himself came out of his tent, and looked about. Silent Tongue stood near. The renegade was about to dismiss him with a gesture, but suddenly refrained.

"Where's the Red Snake?" he inquired by gesture.

The other replied through the same silent channel of communication.

"H—l," muttered the renegade, as he motioned the dummy off. "Nothing but thet thing, White Sarpint, lately. Blast it, ur *him*, whether man or devil, I must move out o' here! The Red Snake keeps it up—tryin' ter ferret out the myst'ry! I hope 'e will, even ef 't makes 'im a rival fur my place in the tribe! He b'ars me no good-will, 's fur thet! But 'e seems ter be a prime cock among the Shawnees through this rejun; so I'll hev ter put up with 'im. Au-haw; thar 'e comes now!"

Red Snake it was indeed who came into camp from the west. A group instantly gathered around him. Indian Heart approached it.

"My brother is diligent," was the purport of his words addressed to the new-comer. "He has been on the trail alone. What has he seen?"

"What I will show only to Indian Heart," was the reply. "Red Snake is tired of the trail. His heart is sad with evil forebodings!"

He drew something from his breast and passed it to the renegade. The latter examined it and shuddered. It was a piece of birch-lining, on which a rude drawing represented a strange Indian, with a *White Serpent* painted upon his breast. And the Indian was in the act of slaying a Shawnee warrior!

"Say nothing of this, now, Red Snake," muttered Indian Heart, aside. "We are looking for the return of Silent Creep. Don't forget to have a vigilant guard about the camp to-night. In two more suns I will break camp. We *both* will try to track this mysterious enemy then!"

He turned and entered his tent, not wishing the warriors to notice his perturbation. Red Snake gazed after him with a demoniac smile!

"Ay, hellion, we *will* go on the trail together!" mused the latter. "And to one of us—" he turned to hide his own evil looks from the crowd. A little way off was the dummy, who made a secret gesture. Without any apparent object Red Snake joined him and both leisurely passed behind the line of tents.

Half an hour passed, when, suddenly, a mournful cry was heard in the distance. It was quickly followed by two shouts denoting triumph of some kind. Ere the last echo of these died away, there was a commotion in the Shawnee camp. Every lodge was emptied; the warriors, young, old or wounded thronging the open space and gazing eagerly in the direction of the shouts.

Indian Heart himself stood just outside his tent. The recent look of uneasiness was gone, and in its place was one of malignant joy. For he well knew that Silent Creep was approaching, and that the latter had *two* prisoners! One warrior lost—but what was that, in view of the feast of vengeance in prospect!

Dureau glided to his side, and was about to speak.

"Frum this out, y'ur plottin' 's *y'ur own*!" interrupted the renegade. "*Remember* thet! Au-haw! 'Thar they come!"

CHAPTER VII.

A TIMELY SHOT.

A RUDE litter borne by four warriors; and upon it a dead body! Behind these, Silent Creep, conducting a white man whose arms are bound. And bringing up the rear, two Indians, who led Eunice Wilde!

This was the cavalcade which greeted the eyes of Indian Heart and his motley crew.

Mingled cries and groans of sorrow went up from the crowd. The aged squaw already noted, pressed forward regardless of ceremony, and threw herself upon the dead body as soon as it was laid upon the ground. And no wonder! It is that of her step son. Only a daughter is left her now—Looine!

But the groans of sorrow are quickly succeeded by angry though exultant yells! The sacrifice is not bootless! The presence of two prisoners attests this.

Silent Creep thrusts them directly before his superior.

Already has the renegade's lurid glance scanned the face of Eunice Wilde, which is pale as marble. Her head is drooped, as though to avoid the fiendish glances around her. Instinctively she leans upon Rhodan, who meets the fierce looks of his enemies with one of stoical indifference.

Silent Creep narrates the incidents of his journey with that conciseness peculiar to an Indian. He frequently points to the old borderer during his tale. The fact that he is the noted "Scarred Eagle," gives increased satisfaction.

Meantime, Indian Heart gazed upon the male prisoner with something more than usual interest. A most fiendish joy lit up his repulsive features.

"Silent Creep has done well!" he said, as the other concluded. "No chief could have done better. He has brought a white squaw to be my wife, as I told him. Indian Heart will tame her. He has also captured no common enemy in the person of 'Scarred Eagle!' It is well. He has lost only one warrior; but—you'll see how 'e'll be avinged!"

He delivered the last sentence in *English*. And as he did so, he turned, bringing a hand down heavily upon the resistless borderer!

"Au-haw!" he resumed. "Mebbe I don't know ye, *Rhodan Bates!* But I *dew*—cuss y'ur blasted pictur,' I *dew!*" he hissed. "Th' new don't rub out th' old, ye see. Come right inter my hands—ha! ha! It's a piece uv fortin I 'bout gi'n up ever hevin'; but I ailus hoped for't! Blast ye, yis; ever sence th' time, years ago, when ye interfered with my prospicts! Twice ye done it; *twice*, cuss y'ur pate; but th' las' time I *beat ye!* I knowed yer friend—thet saintly hypercrit uv a *Thorpe*—got settled, an' I knowed jest as well you *didn't!* I'm glad on't, I be—cussed glad! Fur here ye be now—jest when I'm sp'ilin' fur revinge. What! Why don't ye speak? Hain't ye nothin' to say?"

"Nothin' thet 'ud count," replied the old borderer, his voice calm, though his face had grown a shade paler.

"Nuthin' thet'll count, eh? I guess ye know thet well 'nuff! Ye used to be saintly talkin'! used to be moril! Thet's it, *moril*—given to notions 'bout what th' smirkin' preachers sed. Duz it stick to ye yit?"

"I'm above sich jeerin's, Bill Rogers!" replied Rhodan

"They don't affect me. Nothin' I c'u'd say 'ud change my distiny whatever it's to be. Ef I thought 't could *your'n* I'd say it. Howsomever, this much I'll warn ye. Bad's ye be, ye've got a soul, an' it'll *turn* on ye some day!"

"Oh, blast ye, shet up o' thet! Bosh! Talk 'bout souls! Lalk a-her; I'll turn *your'n* bottom side up afore I've done with ye! Duz it skeer ye? I'll give my Injuns a feast uv revinge that'll make 'em dance with joy! D'ye b'lieve it? Then what makes thet blasted provokin' look on y'ur profile? Tryin' to look *me* down, eh? Cuss ye, then, take thet fur y'ur imperdence!"

Stepping slightly back, he dealt Rhodan a powerful blow with his fist that laid the latter prostrate!

Up to this time Eunice Wilde had retained a degree of strength and self-possession. But when Rhodan was struck down, the horrors of her situation culminated, and she also fell, fainting!

The crowd of warriors gazed upon the conduct of their head chief with undissembled wonder. Never had his aspect been more ferocious. They comprehended that he felt a more than common hate for the Scarred Eagle. They ranged around the prostrate prisoners, uttering sympathetic yells of hate.

"Fall back!" cried Indian Heart, sternly. "You shall have a chance to torture the prisoner. He is of the race to which I used to belong; I have more cause to hate him than you all. We will enjoy his torture together; but *I* claim the right to begin it."

The purport of his words, addressed to the Shawnees in their own tongue. And his words were at once obeyed. By his further directions, the fainting girl was carried into an adjoining tent, an Indian youth standing guard outside.

Rhodan was not stunned, though blood flowed freely from his face. His arms were bound *behind*; but, as the crowd fell back, he managed to attain a sitting posture.

Naturally his eyes fell on the most conspicuous object before him—Indian Heart.

"Hev a keer, Bill Rojers," he said. "Even an Injun has some true notions uv bravery! These 'ere'll be ashamed on ye at second thoughts. Barrin' thet ye've the *form* uv a man, y'ur rage's as foolish as thet uv a squaw!"

The extraordinary coolness of Rhodan's demeanor could not but be marked by the crowd. Yet it was provoking to the renegade.

"Oh, thet's it, eh?" he hissed. "'Shamed on me, be they? Ye durned fool! Hain't they hed a chance to know ef I'in a coward? How'd I come to be a chief, ef they hedn't? Ye know better. Yer arms ar' bound, an' I strike ye—*so*! 'Cos it's part o' th' tortur'—a faint beginnin' on't—'cos it hurts ye—agervates ye—*mads* ye! 'Cos it suits my mood—ye wizen-faced—*thar*! *So* much fur y'ur gabbin.' Now the rest shell give th' *second* course! Mehbe ye'll like it better!"

The wretch had accompanied his last remarks by a series of kicks and blows upon his defenseless victim, who again lay prostrate.

He now turned and addressed a few words to the excited and impatient crowd. With gleeful yells, a portion of the most active sprung into the forest. These soon returned with armfuls of stout saplings.

Meantime, the old borderer, by great exertion, had again risen to a sitting posture. He knew what was coming, and felt a terrible dread. Yet he determined to face the renegade to the last!

The latter had moved a few steps away. One of his warriors passed near Rhodan. As he did so, he pronounced a word which reached only the ears of the latter. It was "courage!"

Rhodan turned his head quickly. But the strange warrior passed as quickly on. Who was he?

The prisoner had little time to reflect. Two or three savages darted forward and jerked him to his feet. Then he was led to a position at the head of two files of warriors, all of them armed with clubs.

"So ye see!" broke in the renegade, with a malicious laugh. "Ef I ain't forgot, some o' th' Mohawks used to call ye Big Leap! Now, show us y'ur pace. Mehbe ye kin git through th' lines! Ef ye kin, th' woods ar' afore ye."

Rhodan paid little heed to the wretch. He knew he himself could never get through the line without severe punishment. Even if he could get through at all, new torture would await him. Despite what he had already received, he retained more strength than his enemies knew of.

He resolved to use it in an entirely different manner from what they expected.

Two stout warriors stood beside him. At a signal from Indian Heart, they cut the thongs binding Rhodan's arms. As they stepped aside, Rhodan glanced down the rows of fierce, expectant faces! He stretched his limbs as one who braces himself for a desperate undertaking.

Suddenly he bounded away! not through the files of warriors, however. Between them and his starting-point was a short interval of space, to the right of which were only two or three maimed Shawnees.

He had snatched a light club from the ground as he started, and now he is speeding through this open space.

The expedient, evidently so unexpected, caused surprise and momentary inaction on the part of the Shawnees. But the terrible voice of Indian Heart rung out, and before its echoes ceased the warriors are in pursuit.

Rhodan had used his club but once—knocking down one of the maimed warriors, who made a desperate attempt to arrest his progress.

The edge of the forest is only about sixty yards distant. If he can gain this he will at least have a chance for his life. Already has the prospect of this, and a wild hope that something *yet* may be done for Eunice Wilde, aroused a desperate strength.

But, as he runs, a hitherto unnoticed obstacle presents itself. A creek winds the length of the open space, within two rods of the woods. It is too wide for a single leap, and, though the water is shallow, the channel is composed of bowlders—rough, slippery, and of all sizes!

The howling pack in his rear leaves him no alternative. He dashes down the bank, and makes his way across the stream. He knew there was hardly a hope now. Something struck his head causing him to fall forward on his face.

He scrambled up again, however. But by this time three or four warriors have crossed, and rushed upon him. Rhodan yet retains his club, and wields it desperately for a moment. One of his assailants is felled backward into the stream. Then he himself drops under raining blows.

"Au-haw!" roared the renegade, as the man he hated was

once more brought forward. "Ye durned foolish *fool!* D.d ye 'spect ter git away? No. Ye only hoped 'er git y'ur death the quicker! Ha! ha! now this 'ere's fun! 'Tain't as 'twas when ye got Helen Ward away, is it? 'Tain't as 'twas when ye tried ter drag *me* away from the Mohawk camp, so 's ter *rope* me in Skernacterdy settlemint! Oh, cuss y'ur pate, no! Made a repertation out o' thet, didn't ye? Now 'ur comin ter the endin' on't!"

The villain turned aside and consulted a few moments with his warriors. The result seemed highly satisfactory to them, for they uttered approving shouts.

Rhodan was not long in ignorance of their designs. A solitary second-growth hickory stood near by. This was lopped about six feet from the ground; and then, the now weak and nearly helpless victim was bound to it.

The warriors surged back, and Indian Heart stood out prominently before his victim.

"Ha! ha! Rhodan Bates!" he exclaimed, with fiendish glee. "I s'pose ye kin guess what's comin'. Ye s'pose it's fire; an' so 'tis. But not *yit*, mind! not by a cussed sight. That 'u'd shorten operations tew much. Y'ur ter be *spotted* fust! Yes, *sir*; spotted! Y'ur face, neck, breast an' arms—pieces cut out 'bout as big 's a penny! Arter thet's done—then ye'll burn! Now, don't howl! Try ter keep up! D'ye s'pose ye *kin*? Oh, ye've nothin' ter say? We'll begin, then!"

As the brute finished his tirade, he turned to one of his chiefs.

"Silent Creep, the prisoner, taken by your hands, awaits the torture. Set an example that the braves may follow!"

The one indicated sprang forward with a tremendous whoop, and brandished his keen blade before the victim. Then stepping closer, he clutched Rhodan's cheek, distended the skin, and raised his knife.

At this moment a rifle-report, sharp and clear, rung out from beyond the creek. Silent Creep relinquished his hold on the victim, staggered back, and fell heavily. The bullet had pierced his brain!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUMMY.

WORDS are inadequate to describe the sensations of the Shawnees, as Silent Creep fell in their midst.

Their various attitudes presented a striking tableau.

Indian Heart—his repulsive visage contorted, his ferocious eyes rolling wildly, and his body bent back, while his gaze is riveted on his stricken chief!

The Indians—motionless as their leader, standing as though dumb and powerless!

Surprise, fear, dread, and anger—all these are mingled in their looks and attitudes.

It was only for a moment or two. A ringing revenge-cry aroused them. It came not from the lips of Indian Heart. The voice of *Red Snake* uttered it!

Instantly the scene changed.

The renegade, with a terrible oath, shrieked out his orders as his hand indicated a spot in the distance whence came the fatal shot!

He himself was not in condition to join, much less lead, in the chase for their mysterious foe. Only one opinion prevailed in regard to the latter's identity. That it was the dreaded White Serpent, none doubted for a moment.

In less time than we have occupied in describing this scene, every able-bodied warrior had crossed the creek and disappeared in the adjacent forest.

Red Snake had taken the lead! Though not a chief by title, his assiduity, prowess, and EYE, caused his Shawnee colleagues, in cases similar to the present, to follow his directions instinctively!

Indian Heart, forgetting his waiting victim at the stake, hurried as far as the creek. There he paused with a number of his wounded allies, all watching the pursuers till the latter disappeared from view.

Just beyond the renegade's ken a little by-play was per-

formed which, had he seen or understood, would have furnished him, possibly, a clue to late mysteries. But this was not to be.

Of course the pursuers did not expect to find their secret enemy at the spot whence the bullet came. *Naturally*, he would plunge into the deep forest, trusting to speed or some secret hiding-place, to elude them. Hence they pushed wildly forward, scattering to the right or left, as directed by Red Snake.

None of them thought of looking *behind* as they left the edge of the woods. The last of them, however, were not half a dozen bounds from the skirts of the camp when a figure rose from the side of a rough boulder, and seemed to be following as one of them in the chase!

It was that of the dummy—Silent Tongue!

He did not go far, however. As soon as he could do so safely, he turned aside, and was not long in making a circuit of the camp. He then entered it stealthily, and secreting his rifle, joined, unperceived, those who yet clustered around Indian Heart at the creek.

"So-ho, Injun Heart! What *now*, Shawnees! Not ten days ago thar was Big Bow an' the Skulker got thar death! *Then* ye fretted an' foamed, an' raged—ha! ha! what'll ye dew now? Ye'd 'bout got over thet horror, an' now comes another, through the death of Silent Creep! Ye seem not ter know thet my *rifle* ain't dumb ef *I* be!"

This was the drift of Silent Tongue's soliloquy as he joined the group about the infamous renegade. None noticed him, or if they did, not particularly. Being deaf and dumb, it was not expected that he would join such a chase as that now inaugurated.

For some time the renegade remained at the creek, gazing in the direction taken by the pursuers—his features working, his hands clenched, and yet something of awe in his looks. The aged or maimed warriors around him maintained almost unbroken silence. But at last they, as well as their chief, were aroused by the now wailing notes of grief behind them.

They turned back to the spot where lay the dead body of Silent Creep. A few of the nearest relatives of the deceased were around the body. Indian Heart gazed upon the scene moodily, not at once noticing his victim at the stake.

The aspect of Rhodan had changed materially. The death of Silent Creep; the dispersion of the warriors; his own sudden reprieve from torture—this, with the remembrance of the word whispered in his ear by an unknown savage, gave him a ray of hope. How long would it last?

Suddenly, attention was drawn upon him by an incident that came near terminating both hope and life!

The old squaw before mentioned stood near. Her grief had been intense—wild. She knew that her step-son had met his death at the hands of Rhodan. Anger, ferocious and crazy, had succeeded grief, and she could not await the signal for further torture.

With a tigress howl and look she darted toward the bound forester, aiming a knife at his breast! But there was one who anticipated her. It was Silent Tongue. He grasped her in time to thwart her vile intent, though the knife inflicted a slight flesh wound in Rhodan's arm!

"Good!" growled the renegade, as he witnessed the act. "The Silent Tongue did well. Back, Mioma! Would you rob the warriors now absent of all part in the torture?"

The refractory hag was led away. Indian Heart gazed upon his helpless victim.

"Ye hoped that blow 'u'd finish the work, didn't ye?" he jeered. "Not yit, though. Y'ur durned carkiss 'll hev ter undergo th' hull course, mind. The reds 'll all hev a pick at ye, tew. Don't think they'll be away long. Ef they don't find him they ur arter, they'll make it up by tortur's on you it 'u'd make ye faint ter *think* on. Au-haw! faintin' now, eh? Take him into a lodge an' do something to revive him," he added, in Shawnee. "He must not be too weak when we renew the tortur'. Where is the Silent Tongue? He shall watch him."

He caught the eye of the latter, and made a few silent gestures. The dummy followed those who conveyed Rhodan. None noticed the covert smile upon his face as he obeyed the renegade's orders.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRENCHMAN'S HONOR.

THE bodies of the fallen warriors were placed side by side, not far from the death-stake. After being arranged according to savage taste and custom, the relatives placed themselves around in solemn silence.

They would remain thus till time came for the renewal of the torture. Then the bodies would be uncovered, as though to witness the spectacle of revenge.

Indian Heart watched the proceedings for a short time, in gloomy mood. But his feelings were not of sympathy. Revenge and *aread* filled his mind. The first he could indulge freely; the second he endeavored to conceal as much as possible. He had hopes that *this* time his warriors would bring in their much-dreaded enemy. Should they not, he would satiate the full measure of his revenge on Rhodan, guard well the camp that night, and in the morning leave a region where lurked so mysterious a foe.

He felt a touch upon his arm, and turning, met the gaze of the Frenchman, Dureau.

"Au-haw!" he ejaculated, in no pleasant tone. "What are ye here for? Why ain't ye with the rest, s'archin'? That ain't an able-bodied brave left, 'cept a few that hev b'en posted jest outside the camp."

And these few *since* Silent Tongue came in. For there was a fear *felt*, though not expressed, that the terrible White Serpent might hurl death into the camp, even while he was being sought for. Such an event would have been hardly less strange than what had happened an hour before.

"You must know why, Indian Heart," replied the Frenchman, with an insinuating smile. "Would it look well for a *prisoner* to join in such a chase?"

The renegade uttered a frightful oath.

"I onderstan' what y'ur drivin' at, Dureau," he said. "But, look 'ere! This thing's got ter stop. 'Twon't work!"

"What do you mean?" answered the other. "Won't work? I assure you it will. It *has* worked, so far, much better than I expected. Let me tell you. I have seen her—conversed with her. I got in through a rift which I made in the rear of the tent. She had just recovered—the attendants had been attracted outside, she was alone. I knew how to put on the right looks—how to introduce myself—how to account for my presence. But would you believe it? Before I had spoken ten words, she fixed her glorious eyes upon me—"

"Bosh!" interrupted the renegade, in disgust. "D'ye s'pose I'm in a mood ter listen ter sech baby lingo? Now see 'ere—"

"Don't cut me off yet," broke in the Frenchman. "I'll be short. Well, then, her eyes blazed with bitterest scorn—"

"Don't blame 'er!" volunteered the renegade, grimly.

"—And she accused me of being the instigator of all her troubles!" added Dureau, not heeding the other's satire.

"I told ye so—she *ain't* a cussed fool, *quite*," said Indian Heart.

"*Sacré!* Hear me out! I was at no loss. I explained my being here *fully*, and with such a look, voice and manner that she, after much questioning, believed me. I did not speak of love—ah, no! That would have been premature—very much so. I only planned an escape, or rather—ha! ha!—I told her of the plan I had already formed for *myself*, offered to include her in the plan, and she accepted, eager enough. All but *one* thing," added the intriguing scoundrel. "She insisted so earnestly on our trying to escape toward the settlement, that I had to fall in with it. No matter, though. The programme is changed a little, but I can manage it. Now, what do you say?—is it not good?"

"No; 'tain't good, nor't won't *work*, nuther," replied the renegade. "Now I'll sum up ef you're through. Fust p'nce, sarcumstances 's changed sence we talked afore. Ye ain't b'en out 'ere ter see *all* thet's tuk place—"

"*Sacré!*" interrupted the Frenchman, with a shudder. "I know what you mean. I heard the shot and the commotion attending Silent Creep's death. But what's that to do with my case?"

"Jist *this*," said Indian Heart, angrily. "I've got ter give

in, an' so hev *you*. I shell hev ter give up the notion uv hevin' a white wife. I shell hev ter offer 'er up tew 'em——"

"*What!*" almost shrieked the Frenchman. "Offer *her* up on the altar of revenge!"

"Waul, *holler* ef ye want ter be heerd by them thet's 'round. I'd 's lief be heerd ef ye had! 'Thet's what I said —yis! Offer 'er up!"

The Frenchman shuddered. This cold-blooded proposition staggered him for a moment.

"This shall never *be*," he said, in a low, husky tone.

"'Twon't, eh? Who'll purvent it?" said the brute.

"You will. It is not only cruel enough to make Satan himself blush, but unnecessary as well. Ugh! You will not insist on this. You will not break your word with me. She is mine."

"Waul, I know—'cordin' to agreemint, yis," said the renegade, a cunning, grim smile on his face. "Bat ye know how fur the barg'in *went*. I don't want to compermize my standin' 'mongst the tribe by mixin' in *your* affairs. So *claim* 'er as your'n—as one ye want fur yer wife. Make sich 'rangemints with the warriors as ye *kin*—I shain't object!"

Dureau did not reply at once. His eyes gleamed with anger, and he clenched his hands tightly. He saw the renegade's advantage. He knew that to openly claim Eunice Wilde as his prize, and thus to renounce his vows, already given to Looine, would result fatally to his projects. And not only that. In the present excited state of the Indians, it might result in his death.

"You know I cannot do this, Indian Heart," he said, suppressing his anger. "Consider. In the cours* I have marked out, you will not be compromised in the least. You can give out that the English girl is to undergo the torture—to-morrow! The Starred Eagle will suffice for one day. Good! I can steal the girl from you during the night. None will be the wiser."

"D'ye s'pose the Injuns wouldn't suspect it arterwards?" grunted the other. "D'ye s'pose they wouldn't ferret it all out? D'ye s'pose I'm goin' to lose my standin' fur the sake uv a durned girl that you happin to take a notion to? I tell ye ag'in, 'twon't work!"

"And I tell you it has *got* to work!" said Dureau, fiercely. "I see! You want the girl for yourself. You know you can assist me as I have mentioned, if you would. You *will*, too!"

"Au-haw! Mebbe y'ur defyin' me," said the other, with a tiger in his tone. "Take 'eer—I needn't tell ye that!"

Involuntarily his hand sought the handle of his hatchet.

"If you attempt violence—so be it!" said the Frenchman, coolly. "But this know—*your* life, as well as mine, would pay the forfeit."

His hand was in the bosom of his hunting-frock. The renegade knew his adversary grasped a pistol, and that he was skilled in its use.

"Softly," said Dureau, as a sinister smile developed in his face. "I am defying you, though—I *do* defy you. You shall see the truth of my assertion—that a Frenchman is seldom without an expedient in love or war. Let me ask you a question. A young and rising Shawnee warrior—Panther—much loved and respected by the tribe, was found murdered a few weeks ago, up near Ontario. Suspicion attached to no one, and no clue was found. It created great excitement for a time. No torture would have been deemed too severe for the murderer. Do you know who he was?"

"What d'ye mean by y'ur perlayer?" said Indian Heart, uneasily. "How sh'u'd I know?"

He tried to comport himself calmly, indifferently; but the eyes of the young Frenchman, fixed upon him, forbade it.

"*How?*" said the latter, significantly. "Well—three persons, all French, by a most singular coincidence, strolled out one night together, and saw the Panther talking with a *friend*! The two were in a secluded place near which the persons I have mentioned wandered by accident. This is what they saw. The Panther's companion suddenly struck him to the heart with a knife. Then he withdrew hastily. His victim was dead without a groan or struggle. I will only add that one of those persons was myself! Does Monsieur comprehend?" added the Frenchman, coolly.

Indian Heart's lips were apart; his head drooped, and his breath came in short gasps.

"Waul!" he ejaculated, hoarsely.

"Bah! Nothing to us Frenchmen. You hated th

Panther. He stood in your light and you removed him. What of that? He was only an Indian, and what cared we, except as we could make use of the circumstance? Can't I persuade you to allow my little plan of this night to work?"

"Ye know ye've got me—what's the use o' askin'?" said the cowed brute. "Yis—I'll help ye."

"You need not—actively. You sent after the girl for me. That's enough. Only don't interfere—that's all."

"But—what ar' ye goin' ter do with *thet*—hyarafter?" said the renegade.

"That *knowledge*, you mean. Ah!—nothing, so long as you don't refuse to aid me in some little matters, when called upon!"

"We're sorter depindunt on one another, I reckon," rejoined the monster, trying to assume his usual mien and speech.

"Exactly. Bah! it don't pay for us to quarrel. I must remind you of one more thing, though. Anticipating there might be occasion to use this knowledge, I had an understanding with my two friends before coming this way. In the event of my death, they would make inquiries. They would learn enough to enable them to judge how and where I fell. You see? Ah!—there comes Looine!"

"Ye'll hev to be keerful with 'er," said Indian Heart, cringing. "Ye hain't managed right with 'er in view uv what ye've been plannin.' I'll move aside."

"Not for the world. Remain. It will be better for the whole plot. You'll see how I'll manage. What! She's going toward the lodge of the English girl. Ah, Looine!"

The Indian girl paused, looking him askance. Suspicion, jealousy, hate—all were visible in her looks. Indian Heart noticed it, and spoke to his companion in a low tone:

"'Twon't *take*, Dureau! A squaw ain't s'posed to be tuk in to a counsel uv warriors!"

Both were moving toward the girl. Dureau paused at her side; the renegade passed on without seeming to notice her.

"Well!" said the girl, coldly. "What does the Singing Voice wish?"

"Can Looine ask?" returned Dureau, in the tone he so well knew how to use.

"Singing Voice has not sought Looine lately. He has withheld his music from her ears. He has hardly noticed her. Why does he do so now?"

"Ah!" said the dissembler. "Some one has poisoned Looine's ears, else she would not ask that. Have I been idle lately, or have I been busy? When not conferring with Indian Heart, where have I spent my time, except in the forest Looine can answer."

"She can," was the cold reply. "Singing Voice speaks straight. He has been much with the chief since coming from the white settlement. He has held deep counsel with him. But with whom has he counseled in the forest, that he should appear as though dreaming? Looine has seen him thus when he little knew she was near. Were his dreams of her, or of another?"

"Of another! Ah! my lovely forest-bud, I am glad to hear that! Shall I tell you why? Your cold looks told me you did not love me. But they lied. You are only jealous—a sure proof that you *do* love me. My heart is light again. Now, hear me. One of my calling must have time to think—alone! Of plans, movements! Then I confer with Indian Heart, we compare our plans. Good. Is Looine satisfied? Will she look the *old* look now?"

"Wait!" replied the Indian beauty. "You planned with Indian Heart. He sent Silent Creep to the white village you came from. He brought back a white squaw. While he was away, you were occupied with plans, you say. *Now* you can speak with me, can you say with a stout tongue, that the white squaw is not in your mind?"

The wily fellow had all he could do to meet the clear, searching eyes of the girl. But he did.

"She is nothing to me," he said. "She is not in my mind, only as *you* recall her. Did you not hear Indian Heart's declaration that she is to be his wife?"

"I knew *before* it was his purpose. Silent Creep was my relative. I knew the whole plan before he set out. But Indian Heart and Singing Voice *have an understanding!* The latter shall not deceive me. He wishes to blind Looine and take the white girl himself, sometime."

"You wrong me, Looine!" was the instant reply. "I am

afraid you do not love me, since you believe I would crooked. Ask the chief."

"I will ask him nothing; but I will *you*, more. Looine has sharper eyes and keener wits than you think. She saw you passing behind the lodge where reposes the English girl. Afterwards, when she could do so, she went there. Some one had rent a place in the tent and gone in. I peeped through; the white gir' was alone. But some one had been there. Who was it? Can the Singing Voice tell?"

Other than a straight answer *now* would be useless, and the Frenchman felt it. Either Looine herself had seen him enter, or some other, seeing him, had informed her. Even in *this* corner the fellow was not to be foiled. An expedient suddenly occurred to him, over the success of which he afterward chuckled.

"Yes; I can tell. I was coming to that," he replied, readily. "It was I who entered the lodge—secretly, as I thought. Indian Heart is not only stern—he is covetous. I told him where to send to get a white squaw for his slave. But why should not I have her *jewels*? Ah, Looine! will you longer doubt the Singing Voice?"

As he spoke, he drew a gold chain from his pocket and placed it over her arm.

"Do not let Indian Heart see it," he added. "When we return to the neighborhood of the missions, you shall wear it as my *bride*."

A change came over the girl's face. Joy trembled in her sparkling eyes, triumph in that of the Frenchman. His logic, confirmed by a gift, had succeeded.

"It is enough," said the Indian girl. "Looine has proved the Singing Voice, and will doubt him no more."

At this moment an object entering the opposite side of the camp attracted the attention of both. It was one of the pursuers, Looine's rejected suitor. Both, as by common consent, at once separated.

The arrival of the Shawnee lover alone was soon explained. He had accidentally stumbled while running through a rough portion of the forest, spraining his ankle. He brought no news, except that he had left his companions still searching for the secret foe.

But as the hours passed on and none of the rest returned, a strange uneasiness began to be manifested in camp.

Indian Heart came out of his tent, looked at the low altitude of the sun, and then stood gazing in the direction taken by the pursuing party. Pursuing *what*? An unaccountable shudder passed over him as he asked the silent query.

The brute's aspect was as ferocious as ever, yet he looked cowed. He had not shown himself till now since his interview with the Frenchman. He had pondered deeply on what the latter had told him. His passions had been in fierce conflict with his judgment; but the latter prevailed. He could but yield to the power held over him by Dureau. Such reflections had banished, for a time, all thoughts of Rhodan, or the dreaded enemy for whom his warriors were now searching. But now they returned in full force.

The mourners around the dead warriors, grown uneasy at delay, now watched only in turns, part of them mingling with the few who stood around in clusters, talking eagerly, and casting frequent glances toward the skirts of the camp.

The Frenchman had strolled aside, evidently impatient for the time when he could carry out a well-concocted plan. Yet he, too, felt something of the prevailing disquietude.

Silent Tongue yet kept guard outside the tent, where lay the Scarred Eagle, awaiting torture. Occasionally he was seen to gaze in, and make ferocious gestures at the prisoner, as if impatient to witness the latter's punishment.

Indian Heart was about to confer with some of the warriors when, suddenly, two of the absent came into camp, heralding themselves by shouts of exultation.

"Let the warriors speak! What news?" cried Indian Heart, as they approached.

"The White Serpent is *found*! We have not taken him yet; but we have surrounded his place of refuge and he cannot escape!"

The maimed warriors forgot their wounds, the mourners their sorrow, the Frenchman, for a moment, his intrigues. Relief, joy and exultation were in the shouts of those who rushed around the chief and the new-comers.

"Silence!" commanded the renegade. "Let us listen further. Where have you cornered the enemy?"

"Two miles beyond the big swamp. He eluded us long. He is in a fastness of the rocks, where it is difficult to take him. Already has he killed two more of our warriors. But they are planning how to get at him. They will succeed. Red Snake bade us say that Indian Heart shall see the White Serpent very soon!"

In ten minutes after this startling announcement, nearly all able to do so were following the two messengers back to the place where White Serpent had been driven.

Indian Heart, Silent Tongue, Looine's rejected suitor, and the Frenchman remained. The latter's sinister features worked with joy. For, was not this circumstance highly favorable to the success of *his* scheme?

CHAPTER X.

THE ROCK RETREAT.

WE recur to other scenes which took place three or four hours previous to the last *dénouement*.

And first, we survey the hidden cave where young Chapin had been left, suffering from his wounds, horrified at the tragic acts he had witnessed, and full of anxiety concerning his prospects.

The cave was not very far distant from the Shawnee camp. Its exterior formed part of the slope of a considerable hill—almost deserving the name of mountain—whose summit and sides were covered with almost impenetrable scraggy bushes and briars.

More times than once, however, had this mountain been searched from base to summit by the Shawnees. Not a single trace of a lurker could be found, and no spot indicated the existence of a cavern.

The prediction of Silent Tongue in regard to the time that would elapse before young Chapin could regain necessary strength had been fulfilled. It is unnecessary to state how slowly the hours and days had dragged—how the young man

had chafed and groaned in spirit, nor how, after each brief, hurried visit of the strange men, he had been left wondering and uncertain how all would end.

Within the past two days, however, Chapin had been apprised of a plot in which he himself was required to co-operate with his strange rescuers. It is scarce necessary to say how eagerly he fell in with it.

He had about determined to leave the cave, running all risks, when the plot was announced to him. It gave him something to think of; a prospect of adventure; the chance to rid the world of a monster, and, at the same time, repay whatever, in the shape of gratitude, he owed his strange friends. His spirits rose; his strength increased rapidly.

During his many solitary hours he had surmised much concerning the Frenchman. What if the latter was intriguing to get possession of Eunice Wilde? This was the central thought which made his isolation a torture. But as he learned, from time to time, that Dureau was still in camp, he began to think less of his fears for Eunice.

And certainly less now, as he waited for the time, rapidly drawing near, which was to witness the beginning of an adventure.

A bed of coal smoldered in a corner of the cave—remains of last night's fire, whose smoke had passed through a seam in the rocks overhead, and disappeared before daylight.

The fissure through which the smoke escaped had been suggestive to young Chapin. He worked out the suggestion and as a result found a new place from which he could look forth with a wider range, and yet with safety.

He occupied this new position now, half smiling as he thought of his appearance. For he had been busily engaged during the forenoon; and was accoutered like a Shawnee warrior.

But as time passed, every thought of the ludicrous was driven from his mind. He began to be very impatient.

"What can keep the strange man?" he muttered. "He should have been here by this time—at least, he or his companion. He says little, but I can see that he feels very confident his plans will all work. They may not, for all that. Suppose, for instance, the confounded renegade should take a

sudden notion to break camp! Then what would all this plotting and planning amount to? What must be the hate of this White Serpent, *alias* Red Snake, *alias*—devil! For he may be the Evil One himself, for all that I can learn of his white name or antecedents. Well—what must be the nature of his hate for Indian Heart, when he lets pass so many opportunities to kill him for the sake of getting him into his power *alive*. Ugh! I shudder to think of the tortures he would inflict. And yet, it is better the monster should be skinned alive, than his depredations should continue. Ah-ha!”

This finale of his musings was uttered aloud. His gaze had detected a half-dozen moving figures in the distance. Soon others appeared, and all seemed to be eagerly searching for some trail. In a few minutes the Shawnees had glided beyond his scope of observation.

“As I feared,” muttered young Chapin, anxiously. “Something has happened at camp, else White Serpent would have been here before this to conduct me to the place he spoke of. Either he—ha! do I mistake or is it he himself I see moving in this direction? No mistake; it is the very man.”

Chapin at once drew back and climbed down as soon as possible into the cave. Posting himself near the entrance, he awaited events.

“The plan was to conduct me away before raising a commotion at the camp,” he said aloud. “But the commotion, whatever its cause, has come first. What can White Serpent do now, unless to give over his project till another day? He is not far off—as zealous in the search as any of course! But what is his object and what new thing has happened?”

Half an hour passed. Chapin moved about, uneasily. Now that he was prepared, he hated to have Red Snake’s plan postponed, even for a single day. He was about to ascend again to his look-out, when, as though by magic, Red Snake glided through the secret entrance and stood before him.

“Ha! I thought you would not come,” said Chapin. “What has happened?”

“Some of the Shawnees brought in a white prisoner and were going to make an end of him at the stake,” said the other. “I had to interfere through Silent Tongue. Result—

a dead Shawnee. I'm helping them look for the one who sent the bullet. They think the White Serpent is around once more—ha! ha! ha!”

Again that laugh, so weird, and startling, and full of hate, making Chapin's blood tingle!

He turned his head for a moment to evade the other's gaze; then asked:

“Who was the prisoner—where and how was he taken?”

“Don't ask now. He shall be saved—I'll tell you that. You seem well disguised. I think you'll do. Have you the pistols?”

“Yes. But what's to be done? Is not your plan disarranged?”

“By no means. I have a way of making little events work in with my plans. I shall have to keep the fools active a while longer than I intended—that's all!”

“But, how can you get me to the place you have told me of without raising suspicion? I saw the Shawnees. Some of them must be around the hill now.”

“They're nearly *beyond* it by this time,” said the avenger. “I've directed the fools and they'll obey me. I *found* a trail. You understand. They went off in the direction it appeared to take, while I myself was to make a circuit to strike the trail if it turned! It wouldn't do for me to be alone though. A single warrior came with me!”

“And he—may he not penetrate my—”

“Bah!” interrupted White Serpent, “'twas a pretense of course; *you* know I didn't need him. So of course I *dropped* the cur, as soon as convenient! We've waited long enough! Come.”

Chapin, suppressing a shudder, followed him through the secret passage. Once outside, White Serpent glanced keenly around for a moment and then moved off with his new ally.

Chapin adapted his movements to those of the other, imitating the gait and appearance of an Indian eagerly engaged on the trail. Both moved swiftly, however, and in twenty minutes were out of hearing of the Shawnees. Still, neither spoke, nor altered his style of advance in the least. It was possible that some of the Shawnees left at the camp might venture out and run across their path.

The young borderer's frame thrilled with the joy of activity. Again was his trusty rifle in his hand; again was he free; with strength, hope, and a prospect of wild adventure before him. And not only that; he was the coadjutor of a man, unknown personally on the border, but whose fame was notorious. It would be something to remember, something to tell his friends, if the daring feat in view should succeed. He hardly thought of the probability of failure now.

White Serpent began to increase his speed. They had struck a comparatively smooth path, far to the right of which Chapin caught a glimpse of the very swamp through whose recesses his friend Welch had escaped. What news had the latter carried of him to the settlement? That he was killed, probably. How had the news affected Eunice Wilde? Was she mourning his fate?

This newly-opened channel of reflections was abruptly closed by an exclamation from the White Serpent, who halted at the foot of a slope they had just descended. The halt was brief, however.

"Be *careful*; from this spot our trail might be easily discovered," remarked White Serpent. "It must not be. I'll put you ahead to make sure. You see the pile yonder? Make for it direct."

Chapin obeyed, the other coming behind, and taking care to obliterate all signs of passage. The young man was struck by the appearance of the place. It seemed gloomy and forbidding. Some two hundred yards distant rose a huge, irregular pile of rocks. From the view he had of them, it seemed utterly impossible to scale them! And yet he knew that, somewhere about the pile, White Serpent had found a retreat.

Ten minutes later they reached the foot of the cliff. The side next them was nearly perpendicular and presented no chance for scaling. Twenty feet above there was a break—the rocks extending several feet *horizontally*, and then rising perpendicularly again, till they terminated in the inaccessible summit of the cliff far above.

Chapin noted this as his companion led him around toward the left. At last, White Serpent stopped before an aperture, plainly to be seen, and leading upward by a gradual slant.

"This leads up to the level spot you've noticed," he said.

the young borderer. "You remember your post. This is the only place the Shawnees will find to reach you. It is impossible to scale the cliff. Now go up. You will find every thing as I have told you. Are you *sure* that you remember all your instructions?"

"Yes," said Chapin. "But you have forgotten one thing. How am I to get clear of the place?"

"You will know when the time comes. I will relieve you myself. I have another secret means of access; but there is not time, nor is it necessary, to point it out to you now. Come!" he added, with an impatient gesture.

As fully as the young man understood the plan of White Serpent, he would have hesitated a moment before obeying. But the tone and gesture of the other showed he would brook no delay. Chapin passed up into the aperture a short distance and then turned, loosening a portion of rock that tumbled back, partly blocking the space behind him.

"It is well!" came the voice of White Serpent from the outside. "The stone has not entirely concealed the entrance. I trust much to your discretion. Remember, and *wah-h.*"

Chapin listened a few moments; but no sounds of retreating footsteps were heard. Yet he knew the strange man had left him alone!

He immediately began his preparations, though these were few. The distance to the plateau above was not more than twenty feet. On either side he noticed, as he ascended, relays of loose bowlders which a touch might displace. Arrived at the top, he saw a large bowlder so arranged that, with but little exertion of strength, he could send it whirling down the passage, loosening the others in its course, and thus barricading the outer passage.

He cast his eyes around. The edge of the plateau was ragged, and sloped sufficiently to screen him from the bullets of foes outside.

Nothing was wanting. Every thing was exactly as White Serpent had told him.

He directed his gaze outward over the space. Red Snake as he was known by the Shawnees, had already disappeared. Chapin drew a piece of tanned fawn-skin from his bosom and surveyed it with interest. In the center of this, and of

sufficient size to be seen from a distance, the form of a white serpent was clearly defined! He affixed the strange emblem to his breast, and then, grasping his rifle, stretched himself on the rocks to await events.

In the course of half an hour he thought he heard the faint echoes of a shout far away. He was not sure, however. Keeping his eyes fixed in the direction White Serpent had evidently gone, he at length detected the outlines of moving figures. They were gradually advancing toward the pile of rocks, though with great caution. Only at intervals could he catch a glimpse of them.

He soon became conscious that a dozen or more Shawnee warriors were hovering within thirty yards of his retreat. And then he detected the form of *Red Snake*, who had led them to the place. The time for action was near.

Suddenly, Red Snake pointed out where the trail they had followed led to an aperture in the rocks! For a moment, several of the party were in view. Chapin sprung to his feet, immediately attracting the gaze of those below. There could be no mistake. The dreaded White Serpent was upon the rocks.

The discovery by either party seemed simultaneous. As if attempt at concealment was useless, the disguised Chapin fired into the group with amazing quickness. One of them, not three paces behind Red Snake, fell with a mortal wound.

Like lightning the rest sprung close up under the cliff wall, and toward the aperture they had discovered. But, as they reached the spot, a thundering sound greeted their ears, making them spring back involuntarily. The passage was filled before them. A jeering cry came from above, followed by a pistol-shot which pierced the brain of another Shawnee!

All now crowded up under the walls, keeping out of range of their long-dreaded enemy. The aperture was closely examined. It might take hours to force the passage. A portion of the Indians, led by Red Snake, made a circuit of the pile, to search for a place to reach their enemy. None was to be found.

Meantime, two or three of the besiegers had sprung away and soon their signal-notes, loud and piercing, were heard in the distance. The entire force out on the search would soon be attracted to the spot.

Red Snake held a consultation with those remaining with him at the rocks. With their foe standing on the watch above, it would be almost impossible to force the passage. Even should they succeed in removing the obstructions, their single foe at bay would make sad havoc among those who should attempt to ascend onto the plateau.

"We will wait till all the braves arrive," cried Red Snake. "Our enemy can not get away. It may take hours to secure him, but he will be ours at last."

The sun was within an hour of setting when the rest of the warriors began to arrive. Warned of the situation, they were cautious in their approach, taking care to screen their bodies from the range of the plateau. Nevertheless, a shot was fired from the latter place, showing the dreaded foe was vigilant and desperate.

Vociferous shouts greeted Red Snake as he met the newcomers. Their joy was boundless. Red Snake heard new expressions of admiration from all sides. For, at last, his promise to ferret out and capture their long-dreaded foe, was about to be fulfilled.

But how to take their cornered foe was now the question. Their deliberations were not long on this point. A plan was soon arranged. More than a score of the warriors placed themselves in good positions fronting the rocks, while as many as could work at the passage, were sent to remove the obstructions.

As the latter party advanced, the form of the White Serpent was seen, for a moment, as though preparing to fire upon them. In that moment half a dozen rifles spoke, and he dodged from view, without the chance himself to fire.

This incident elicited a chorus of exultant yells.

"The foe is within your reach," was heard the voice of Red Snake. "It is now fit the chief should know of this. I will take two warriors with me to the camp, and return by dark. By that time you will have White Serpent, dead or alive. Good."

The announcement was received with approbation. The conduct of Red Snake did not seem strange. He was proud to be the first who should apprise Indian Heart of his success. Why should he not?

Selecting two, he started away with them. At the distance of a hundred yards he stopped and looked back.

"Let my brothers hasten on," he said. "Red Snake has changed his mind. *They* can inform the chief; Red Snake will rejoin the warriors. Say to Indian Heart, he shall see the White Serpent very soon!"

The two, without a question, plunged forward through the bushes and in a moment were out of sight. Red Snake had also turned; but instead of going to the warriors in front, he stole around to the rear of the pile unseen, unsuspected. For the past few minutes there had been regular rifle-reports from the plateau.

"The young man does well," mused Red Snake. "Little danger of the fools stealing around here. They little know the hours, ay, *days*, I have toiled around this spot! But I have no cause to regret the work."

A large hemlock had fallen away from the cliff, its huge roots spreading out fan-like, within six feet of the wall. No one unacquainted with the secrets would dream of a passage underneath this cavity. And yet there was, as the quick removal of two or three stones by Red Snake revealed. It led upward, across an abrupt angle of the cliff, terminating upon the plateau!

The disguised Chapin had been too busy with his work to examine the plateau closely. He had marked the withdrawal of Red Snake, and now began to wonder how the strange man would release him. He could hear the Shawnees working near the entrance of the passage, while those further away kept up a series of exulting yells.

"Stoop low, young man, and come through here, quick," said a voice behind him.

Turning, he saw Red Snake, who had pushed aside a lime block placed before the end of the passage. Chapin at once disappeared within this, crawling after his strange guide.

In a few moments both had risen beside the tree-roots.

The night-shadows beginning to settle made their retreat from the place safe. In ten minutes the exultant shouts of the Indians came but faintly to their ears.

CHAPTER XI.

AN INTERRUPTED SOLILOQUY.

"THE gal gone?" exclaimed the renegade. "She hez escaped, du ye say?"

"She was here—I saw her not twenty minutes ago!" yelled Dureau. "She has fled since the last of the stragglers went off. We were fools not to think to have some one watch her. Come quick, Low Trail. She is not far off!"

And with the words in his mouth, he sprung away. Low Trail exchanged a rapid glance with his chief, and then bounded after Dureau. A malignant smile overspread the repulsive face of Indian Heart.

"This way!" he shouted to a couple of the convalescent warriors. Spurred by his emphatic command, they hobbled rapidly up.

"Guard the tent of the Scarred Eagle!" he said to them. "The Frenchman is looking for the white girl, who has escaped. But she can't be far off, and Indian Heart will assist in the search. See that you guard well your prisoner, till I return. Come, Silent Tongue!"

This last command was of course communicated by a gesture. The subject of it obeyed with an alacrity never evinced before. His rapid thoughts, spoken aloud, would have run thus:

"Red Snake must be near, for *his* plans never fail. Ha! now if this wolf's whelp should *only* take a notion to search in the very direction we wish him to go!"

In three minutes these two had got beyond the north-eastern skirt of the camp, and were penetrating the forest, where quite a deep gloom began to prevail.

Several minutes later, and the echo of what seemed like a woman's shriek came from the left. Indian Heart stopped and looked around, not noticing that the dummy also turned.

"Au-baw!" he muttered, aloud. "The gal's tuk, an' the durned Frencher's no doubt settled tu! So fur *so* good. An' *now*, 's soon's the White Sarpint's made a finishin' uv thar'i

be jest one more 'n my way, an' *that's* Red Snake hisself—
Au—O-o!"

The last exclamation was one of surprise, but quickly cut short by a blow from behind, which laid him quite senseless. Three dark forms sprung upon him, and in a trice he was gagged, blindfolded, and his arms bound.

Not a word was spoken above a whisper!

"Raise him up!" said Red Snake, for it was indeed he. "Now, young man," he said, addressing Chapin, "go back with Silent Tongue to the release of the prisoners. I can get this thing to the cave alone, for it is not far."

The renegade had been raised to his feet. A great shiver went through his frame; he seemed suddenly deprived not only of freedom but of *will*.

"The girl escaped *herself*," said Silent Tongue. "Low Trail and the Frenchman are seeking her! This imp and myself were also looking—ha! ha!"

"I wondered how you managed to get him off this way," said Red Snake. "Good; I will take care of *this*, and then come back to your assistance. There is time enough!"

As he uttered the word "*this*," he clasped the arm of the renegade, who, without a show of resistance, moved off with him as though unconscious of what he was doing!

The disguised Chapin was in a maze of wonder, that for a moment prevented his speaking. Neither himself nor Red Snake had heard the faint cry which arrested the attention of Silent Tongue and his victim. They were too much absorbed in stealing upon the latter, for that. But, Red Snake's reference to the "prisoners," followed by the disclosure that one of them was a girl who was sought by the Frenchman, made Chapin suspect the truth.

Already was Silent Tongue moving swiftly toward the Shawnee camp, when, with a bound, Chapin overtook him and clasped his shoulder.

"The girl!" he ejaculated, excitedly; "one of us should seek *her*! Did you learn her name? I think—"

"I've reasons fur b'lievin' no hurt'll come to her," interrupted the other. "We must hurry, fur it's comin' time thet some o' the imps'll be stragglin' back to camp. It's now 'a good 's deserted."

A plainly-heard shriek, though suddenly repressed, came to their ears! It acted like magic upon Chapin.

"It is she!" he cried, and then bounded away.

"Be car'ful! Me an' Red Snake'll be 'round soon," said Silent Tongue, as he sprung on to the release of Rhodan.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MAIDEN'S REVENGE.

THE conjectures of the renegade in regard to Eunice Wilde's plans and movements, were literally true.

Not for a moment had she doubted the Frenchman's perfidy. While seeming to trust him, she hoped to turn that perfidy into an instrument of her final escape.

She had no definite plan beyond getting from the camp by his help. But, she had a definite *hope* beyond that. Creeping through the rift made by Dureau, she saw that she might steal away before the reigning excitement would leave room for thoughts of her.

She immediately acted upon the advantage presented. For a brief moment she paused outside, glancing toward the tent of Rhodan. Oh, if she could only help him to escape with her! But an attempt even to communicate with him would be worse than useless. With a suppressed sigh for the brave man awaiting death on her account, she glided away.

The Frenchman mistook the time she had gained. She had not been *ten* minutes absent when he started with Low Trail in pursuit. He more than suspected her action was prompted, in part, by distrust of his own motives concerning her. The more determined was he to secure his prize, at all hazards.

With this thought uppermost, all others were in abeyance for a time. He, at least, did not dream that the Indian girl would suspect him, much less that Low Trail was his deadly enemy.

Not only one, but *both* these propositions were true. He and Low Trail were not fifty yards away, before Lucine

was upon their track, dogging their movements, with a mind full of awakening suspicions.

Occupied solely with these, Looine rapidly and stealthily drew near the two, who had slackened their speed somewhat to search for some clue that would give them the fugitive's direction. Suddenly, she saw Low Trail spring toward his companion and aim a blow with his hatchet at Dureau's head. The latter saw the movement in time to spring aside.

"*Sacré!* what!" he exclaimed; "does Low Trail—"

"Me kill or you kill!" cried the Indian, desperately. "You no want white girl, but *Looine!* Low Trail knows your game, and will begin first!"

As he spoke he renewed the struggle, and Dureau, realizing the truth, was obliged to exert himself to the utmost. The Indian was more than his match in strength; but the Frenchman's superior agility served him well. Springing back before the other's fierce onslaught, he drew a short sword which was concealed beneath his dress. Being an adept in its use, the Indian soon fell before him, with a mortal wound.

"Fool!" hissed Dureau, as he spurned the stricken warrior, "twas a lie. Who poisoned your ear? Indian Heart? I care no more for Looine than for your worthless carcass. The white girl was my prize, and have her I will, despite this delay, or Indian Heart's treachery!"

He bounded on again, half-crazy with rage and excitement. The Indian girl had witnessed the scene, and had stood as if frozen in her tracks. But the moment the Frenchman sprung away, she followed.

"Poor Low Trail!" she murmured, sadly. "We both have been deceived, but Looine will avenge both!"

The movements of Dureau were so rapid, that, in the gloom prevailing, Looine for some minutes lost sight of him. When she regained it, he had partially halted, having discovered a shred of Eunice Wilde's skirt, where she had indeed made her way through a clump of tangled briars. With the stealthiness of a panther, the Indian girl advanced, grasping a keen-edged dagger which Dureau himself had given her.

But the Frenchman was away again, before she could get near enough to strike; away with renewed speed on the trail of the English girl, who could not be far off.

At last he caught sight of her and called upon her to stop. The sound of his voice startled her so that she uttered a slight shriek. Then, nerved by desperation, she darted on at a speed nearly equal to his own.

In less than five minutes, however, the Frenchman overtook her and grasped her shoulder. She cried out; but his hand was quickly pressed upon her mouth.

"For your life make no outcry, girl!" he said, in a low, excited tone. "If you do, the woods will be alive with warriors searching for you. One followed me, and I have just dispatched him. Why did you not wait for me?"

"I knew the warriors were nearly all absent, and thought the time had come," she replied, with a degree of composure.

"They will soon be back—are perhaps returning now," he rejoined. "There is no time to lose. Come."

Eunice Wilde did not hesitate, and tried not to evince distrust. Better in the company of this wretch, with a ray of hope before her, than to be again in the power of Indian Heart and his minions.

As if to assure her of his good intentions, Dureau at once began to lead her in the apparent direction of the distant settlement. But they had not advanced five yards, when a movement behind caused them to glance back. It was well for Eunice Wilde that she did so in time; but *not* so well for her conductor. With a tigress bound, and a cry of frenzied jealousy, Looine aimed a blow at her white rival's heart. The Frenchman pushed the English girl aside; but, in the act, his own body received the blow which could not be stayed. Relinquishing his hold upon Eunice, he fell with a terrible groan. The keen blade had touched his heart!

Eunice Wilde was too much horrified to speak or move for a moment. But the instinct of preservation caused her to start back as she noticed Looine advancing toward her.

"Him dead!" she cried, wildly, pointing to the dying Frenchman. "White girl stole 'im from Looine. She, too, die."

The English girl turned to flee. At the moment, there was a bound, the flash of a pistol, a sudden cry, and she found herself in the arms of a painted warrior. But the latter pronounced her name so quickly, that deep astonishment kept back the shriek of terror which rose to her lips.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAVE REUNION.

EDWIN CHAPIN held Eunice Wilde in his arms, but not a ~~face~~ could she realize the truth of his identity.

She had thought him dead—a victim to the fierce Shawnees. In her dreams she had seen his body mutilated and bloody, and had awoke from them with cries of horror. But this was like the well-remembered voice; it spoke her name, and in the same low tones, only they were more fervid.

Only for a moment could she be in doubt. In spite of the Indian guise it was indeed he! His rapid words of assurance, coupled with the name of Rhodan, told that the brave old borderer was also saved or being saved.

Her lover was about to hurry her away when a form struggling upright before them made both pause.

“Good Heavens! Whom have I killed? Was it an Indian *woman* seeking your life?”

Looine it was who stood there, pressing her hand upon the bullet-wound whence her life-blood was oozing. She merely glanced at the two; then, fixing her eye upon the dead body of Dureau, dropped upon it with a wail of sorrow.

“Looine will follow him to the land of spirits,” she cried, feebly. “Mebbe he be sorry—pity—love her little there!”

The eyes of the reunited lovers remained on the poor girl for a moment, till she breathed out her life on him whose treacherous nature had thus met retribution.

A great heart-sob was uttered by Eunice Wilde as he led her hurriedly away—the expression of sorrow and pity for the untutored Indian girl.

The young man hurried as fast as possible toward the cave. He seemed suddenly endowed with new strength and energy; and, though the rapidity of their movements precluded conversation, Eunice Wilde began to comprehend the possible causes that had led to this startling reunion.

Presently the form of an Indian glided before them, and

Eunice Wilde recoiled in terror. But, the intruder's voice, as he instantly addressed Chapin, assured her it was no enemy.

"So you've found the white girl," he said. "On, then, to the cave, and await me. Rhodan is yet to be released. Silent Tongue ought to be already on the way with him."

On the instant, cries were heard in the direction of the Shawnee camp. The new-comer bounded instantly forward, disappearing in the gloom.

"Who is this strange man, Edward, with whom you are in fellowship?" said Eunice.

"One who has proved my friend, who snatched me from death; one whom I owe gratitude, and yet whose spirit and actions fill me with horror. It is the White Serpent!"

While speaking he had already begun to lead her forward again. The thrill of relief and joy in her mind was, for a time, superseded by deeper wonder.

But she was diverted from these speculations when Chapin stopped in the midst of dense bushes growing at the base of a gloomy, rugged mountain. In a moment he had moved aside a section of the seemingly impervious face of the rock, showing a dark passage beyond.

"This is the cave where we must take refuge for a short time," he said. "The dread renegade, Indian Heart, is within—a prisoner. Eunice, I fear we shall be compelled to witness some shocking scenes. Ah, hear that! There is wailing in the camp! Some of the warriors must have returned; and all are beginning to learn how they have been tricked. Silent Tongue must have got off with Rhodan, and Red Snake will assist. Come in, quickly!"

She suffered him to lead her into the forbidding place, and huddled as he closed the secret passage, leaving them in midnight darkness.

"Courage!" said Chapin; and then letting go her hand he found a torch whose light soon illuminated the cave.

Placing this in the crevice of the wall, Chapin took the hand of the wondering girl, and led her forward. They saw the outlines of a man lying near, every limb bound as with cords of steel; his eyes blindfolded, even his ears closed by a bandage passing over his head! All signs of life visible

were labored upheavings of the breast, upon which a nearer inspection revealed a *piece of rock*!

A nameless terror sealed the lips of Eunice. Chapin, with a shudder of disgust, snatched the rock from the breast of the bound monster, permitting him to breathe more freely. Then, taking the hand of his betrothed, he led her as far into the recesses of the cave as possible.

For half an hour the two sat listening to the accounts of each other's adventures. Both almost forgot impending scenes in the joys of reunion—the clasped hands, the speaking looks, attesting the oblivion of love.

This, however, was not long to continue. An almost imperceptible sound came from the entrance-way, and Chapin started to his feet. Three men were coming forward, one of whom, as he came near, bestowed a puzzled look upon Chapin, and then stretched out a weak hand to Eunice Wilde.

"Thank Providence for his marcies, young woman. I'm glad—"

"Oh, Rhodan!" cried Eunice, ecstatically, as she clasped and kissed his hand.

"Thet we're saved, seems plain; but who these be I've yit to l'arn, onless— Ho, boy; I believe it's you, sartin."

"Yes, old friend; you're right," exclaimed Chapin. "Ah, what is this?" he added, taking a step forward.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOMENT OF A LIFE.

RED SNAKE and Silent Tongue had raised the renegade to his feet. The latter's legs were left in such a manner that he could stand easily, though an attempt to move from his position would result in a fall.

As Chapin spoke, Red Snake, by a gesture, motioned him to a position fronting the victim. Was he again, in the same spot, to witness a sanguinary scene? Whatever Chapin's thoughts, he obeyed at once.

Then Red Snake proceeded to loosely bind Silent Tongue, who submitted with a grim smile.

The other silent spectators in the scene looked on with fascinated interest. What mode of punishment had the strange man in view?

When the above acts were performed, Red Snake dexterously removed the bandage from the renegade's eyes, the gag from his mouth, the covering from his ears. Then he stepped back, and planting himself directly facing his victim, said:

"Indian Heart, I sent you word, not an hour since, that you should soon see the White Serpent!"

The renegade gave a slight start, and his gaze became riveted on the speaker. Never before had he heard him speak English.

"You seem surprised," added Red Snake. "Ha! ha! ha I have redeemed my promise. He is here!" and, stepping from before Chapin, the renegade's gaze met the figure of the White Serpent on the disguised man's breast.

Then, after a moment's pause, he loosened his outer garments, and they dropped to his feet. The renegade could not repress an exclamation of terror as the truth flashed upon him. For before him stood the scourge of the Shawnee race—a man of more powerful mold than himself; eyes of jetty blackness, from whose depths a glamour came which might of itself have proved sufficient to hold the renegade in his tracks. Evidently white, too—his good English attested that, as did also his features, despite the paint upon his face. His dress was that of an ordinary Shawnee warrior, except that terrible emblem upon the breast of his robe—a large white serpent in the act of springing upon a foe! And as a fitting illustration of his character, the foot of this terrible scourge was even now upon the breast of a prostrate Shawnee!

But the renegade as yet only comprehended part of the truth.

"Now!" said White Serpent, with a jeer. "I gave you a piece of birch lining three hours ago—ha! ha! Do you remember it?"

The astonished villain could make no reply.

"'Twas before the death of Silent Creep, you remember. Now, you're trying to imagine who ended *him*. You little

dreamed of my power to make the deaf hear and the dumb speak ! It'll do ; come here, Silent Tongue."

The latter at once confronted the victim with a jeering laugh.

"Ye see I kin both speak an' hear, hellion," he said. "'Twas *me* thet sent the bullet inter y'ur brave's skull ! Mebbe I didn't hear the perlaver of you an' thet Frencher ! Mebbe I hain't kep' my ears open whenever thar was any thing goin' on ! Mebbe I didn't know how Big Bow met 'is death ! Oh, cuss ye, yis !"

It would be difficult to describe the looks of Indian Heart as these successive revelations were made, and to describe the sensations of old Rhodan and Eunice Wilde, standing in the background.

"Then you was crowing over the prospect of White Serpent's capture, were you ?" resumed he now known by that name. "With him no longer to dread, the Frenchman out of your way, there would have been only Red Snake to get rid of, eh ? Ha ! ha ! been free then, wouldn't you ? Ah, you *have* got rid of Dureau ; the Red Snake disappears from this moment ; but you're not rid of *me* yet, *Bill Rojers* !"

Not only the renegade himself, but old Rhodan evinced the most intense interest, as White Serpent spoke the name. The latter involuntarily moved a step nearer, but the avenger's look remained fixed on his victim.

"Renegade Bill," resumed the latter, "your warriors are, no doubt, looking for you. They have discovered the imposition practiced on them at the ledge. They are, no doubt, beating the forest within a few rods of this spot ! But, for all the good to you, they might as well be a thousand miles hence !"

White Serpent, with a glance at his victim, called Silent Tongue, suddenly turned, and betook himself to a distant recess of the cave, but presently returned into their midst, not attired as when he left them. The paint had been removed from his face ; a hunter's garb had been substituted for that lately worn. He glided at once before the renegade, who started as though he had seen a spirit. As he gazed, the sweat of terror stood upon his brow ; his lips fell apart, and his eyes seemed staring from their sockets !

"Ah—I see I am recognized !" exclaimed the transformed

man. "You little thought when you were showering your cowardly abuse on Rhodan Bates this afternoon, who was watching you. You little dreamed when exulting over the supposed death of Eli Thorpe years ago, that he himself, after seeking you for years, had lately found you and was ever then standing by your side! And now, despoiler of homes and virtue, your hour has come! Can you imagine the death you are to die?"

At that moment the cowed monster, either through excessive fear or a sudden wild attempt to free his limbs, fell forward, his head striking the rocky bottom near the avenger's feet. White Serpent, or Eli Thorpe, as he is now known, suddenly stooped; there was the flash of a glittering blade; a howl of pain, and Thorpe rose upright, shaking a gory scalp in his grasp!

"Ha!" he said, with savage exultation. "The Indians you led on that night when you robbed me of my wife, only got *part* of my scalp, and here have I taken the whole of yours. Yet I've only *begun*, Bill Rojers, as you'll soon see. Now! Up with him, Ben!"

Silent Tongue at once stepped forward and helped raise the renegade to his feet.

It is needless to say that Rhodan Bates had also recognized the friend of his youth; but how changed! There was the same voice; only its tones were so deep and stern that they caused even Rhodan to shudder. He well knew the cause this man had to hate the monster before him; he realized too that Eli Thorpe, his mind full of pent-up vengeance, might not brook expostulation, much less interference; yet, for the sake of the horrified girl, Rhodan resolved to attempt the former. As Eunice Wilde gave utterance to a shriek of horror, Rhodan advanced to speak.

"Back! Rhodan Bates," cried Thorpe, as though divining his object. "Even *you* shall not interfere now. Don't *dare* to! Ha! ha! that's the direction—forward with 'im, Ben Mace; we'll give that devil's skull, where so many murders have been hatched, a fit dose!"

Both seized the monster and bore him back to a spot where a tiny stream of cold water came down through a seam in the rocks overhead.

Chapin had borne Eunice Wilde as far back as possible behind an angle of the cave where sight nor sound of the torture might reach her. He, as well as Rhodan, had little hope of staying the avengers in their work.

Rhodan stood gazing upon them, his frame shuddering—not more from the scene transpiring, than from the stern voice and attitude of Thorpe toward him.

Quickly as these thoughts passed through his mind, they were diverted, or confirmed, rather, as shrieks and howls rung out, filling the cave with their echoes! The stream of water falling on the stripped cranium of the monster renegade was doing its work!

Rhodan turned and sprung back to the place where Chapin held Eunice against his breast, trying to shut out the fearful sounds from her ears.

“This must end, youngster—it *shell*. I’ll try though I risk my own life!”

As the old borderer spoke he grasped a pistol which he had noticed in Chapin’s belt, and then hurried from his side. As he regained the scene of torture the cries of torment suddenly ceased. The victim’s terrific struggles had so far overcome the endeavors of the avengers, as to clear him from the stream of water. He had fallen upon his side.

Even then the avengers seemed not ready to give over their work. But ere they could resume it, a deep husky voice caused them to turn. And then there was the flash and report of a pistol; a smothered cry of pain from the renegade. The bullet had sped through his brain!

“Eli Thorpe!” cried Rhodan, “ye’ve done enough; don’t dew no more, ef ye vally not only yer futur’ in life, but yer hopes uv thet ter come. Come Eli, try ter think it’s yer old friend Rhodan; an’ let’s converse rationally.”

Thorpe came slowly toward the speaker, fixing his eyes upon him. Not threateningly, however. Something in the voice and words of Rhodan had driven the tiger feeling from his heart. The appeal had not been vain.

“Did I dew right, Eli?” asked the old hunter.

“Rhodan!”

“Ah, Eli, thet sounds more as ’t did years ago.”

As he spoke their hands met and clasped.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RING'S REVELATION.

THE hour succeeding the events just narrated was one of strange excitement in the cave. It ended by Rhodan's triumph over the still fierce purposes of Thorpe and Ben Mace; they were made to see that blood enough had been shed, and agreed to return to the settlements and again lead lives of peace. This then soon left the party at liberty to act at once. Thorpe and Ben went forth to reconnoiter, and were surprised to hear the clash of fire-arms, in the direction of the settlement. Pressing in they discovered that the attacking party were men from the Rocheverde settlement, led by Dick Welsh. The already disheartened Shawnees were quickly scattered or destroyed.

It is impossible to describe the joy of these bordermen when they found all those they had sought alive. But what was their joy when they heard the details of the prisoners' escape, and saw in the person of Eli Thorpe the notorious White Serpent?"

All possible haste was made from the bloody scene. At the distance of a few miles they halted in a secure position for the night. And before another came all arrived safely at the settlement.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the congratulations which greeted their arrival, nor of the astonishment of the settlers on learning the character of the strange hunters who accompanied them. Brom Vail, the *protégé* of Rhodan, met the latter as he would a father. The tie binding them could have been no stronger. Brom was yet lame from his wounded ankle, having made great exertions to reach the settlements and direct the men in pursuit. His part has been as nothing in the recent adventures; but when the time came—as come it did—he proved to have abilities as a scout, of which few in that place dreamed.

But one incident claims note in reference to the abduction

of Eunice Wilde and the murder of her foster-parents. The Indians hastily plundered the cabin, but, of course, did not fire it, as such an act would have revealed their proximity to the main settlement. And so the effects of Wilde were found scattered at random, the ravagers finding little they cared to take. A quantity of loose papers were found, and among them a legal document, written years before, to which was signed the name "Joseph Rogers," in Wilde's hand. He was, indeed, a brother of the infamous renegade. His motives in thus assuming another name were apparent. But this did not prevent Eunice from mourning for the strange man who had been a good father to her.

But a strange development was yet to take place, and briefly we will trace it.

Weeks passed, and the tide of Indian warfare receded from that section of territory. The settlers resumed their natural occupations with less dread of foes. Naturally enough, too, such as were so inclined or mutually agreed, entered into the matrimonial state. Among such were Edwin Chapin and Eunice Wilde. The occasion was one of more than ordinary interest, on account of the thrilling adventures through which both had passed.

Not only Brom Vail and Rhodan, but also the latter's friends, Thorpe and Mace, were present as fitting spectators of the ceremony, and gravely, though joyously, they congratulated the young people.

The man, Benjamin Mace, was the last of these four who greeted her by a simple hand-shake, after the fashion of the settlement. As he did so, his eye fastened on an old-fashioned gold ring which the maiden had long worn. Mace gave an almost imperceptible start, and was half-resolved to retain her hand; but not caring to be noticed, turned away thoughtfully.

Not an hour afterward, Mace and Eli Thorpe were in close conversation on a subject which the latter, with a smile, referred to Rhodan Bates, who had approached them.

"Ben has an idea that Chapin's wife is the one whom he rescued from the Indians, years ago, when she was a mere infant," said Thorpe. "It's a ring she has on gave him the clew, he says, though I didn't notice it myself."

"The shortest cut ter sich a trail is ter question the young

leddy," said Rhodan. "Ask 'er ter show ye the ring. Ther's proper enough."

"So I've been telling him. From what he's told me, I think it may be as he suspects. He's no need of being backward about asking her."

"I've 'bout concluded on't," said Mace. "'Twas years ago, long afore I was married. I got tuk by the Injuns up Can-gda way, but I escaped from 'em, in course. Thar was a white woman a pris'ner 'mong 'em, tu; she hed a child, which 'twan't more'n tew years old, then. She tried ter escape with me—her an' the child. She tuk the ring off'n 'er finger, an' put a string through it, then tied it 'round the little 'un's neck. That was afore we got ready ter iscape—'cos she was that desprit she wanted the child ter git out'n the Injun life ef she couldn't herself, an' ef she failed, I was to git off with the little 'un ef 'twas possible. Wal, we tried it, but we was missed too soon—for *her*, thet is. 'Twas onpossible ter git off with *both*, but I did with the child, which was a gal. Thar ye hev it. Mebbe this 'ere's the one—mebbe not. I couldn't keer fur the little thing, so I give it to a settler thet promised ter take keer on't. He was a strenger to me, though he give me his name, which I forgot long ago, jest's I did that of the mother, ef she ever gi'n it to me. 'Tain't likely she did—she was too anxious an' excited like. I'm a-goin' ter ask this—Mrs. Chapin, anyhow."

"It's yer course," said Rhodan, after listening to the quaint account. "Come on, now; I an' Thorpe 'll go with ye."

The three at once sought the presence of Chapin and his wife, making known the particular object of his visit. Eunice, deeply interested, took off the ring and handed it to Mace.

"For years I wore it around my neck, till my finger became large enough to hold it," she said. "I believe the initials inside are those of my mother's name."

"I'm jest about *dead sure* this 'ere's the ring," said Mace, "though 'bout the initials—"

He was interrupted by Thorpe, who himself had been examining the ring in Mace's hands.

"Give it here, Ben Mace—and look *you*, Rhodan Bates," added Thorpe, much excited. "You may remember ~~whom~~ *this was*, for see, here's the initials, 'H. W.'"

Rhodan *did* look, did remember! It had belonged to Helen Thorpe, and Eli had given it to her before their marriage. Rhodan followed the glance of his friend, which was bent searchingly on the face of the wonder-stricken maiden. Every one present, for the first time, noticed a marked resemblance between the two. Mace was again questioned, and his description of the captive woman, together with the facts just come to light, left no doubt in the minds of the party. Helen Thorpe had not perished, as they supposed, but had endured captivity among the Indians. All felt this to be true. How long she had thus lived—how she had fared at the hands of the renegade—these were questions solved months afterward, by the indefatigable exertions of Eli Thorpe and his two bosom friends. She had feigned to be crazy, and thus found protection from the renegade, among the Indians themselves. After her attempted escape, the Indians moved into the vicinity of the French missions. There she had sought and obtained protection at the hands of an aged and influential priest, to whom she confided her history a short time before her death—and from this man's successor were these particulars gleaned.

Eli Thorpe lived but a few months after all the facts had been learned. His affectionate daughter was with him to the last. He died with the Christian's hope.

Ben Mace, with Rhodan and Brom, resumed their wandering life. In some of their wanderings we hope yet to meet them.

THE END.

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